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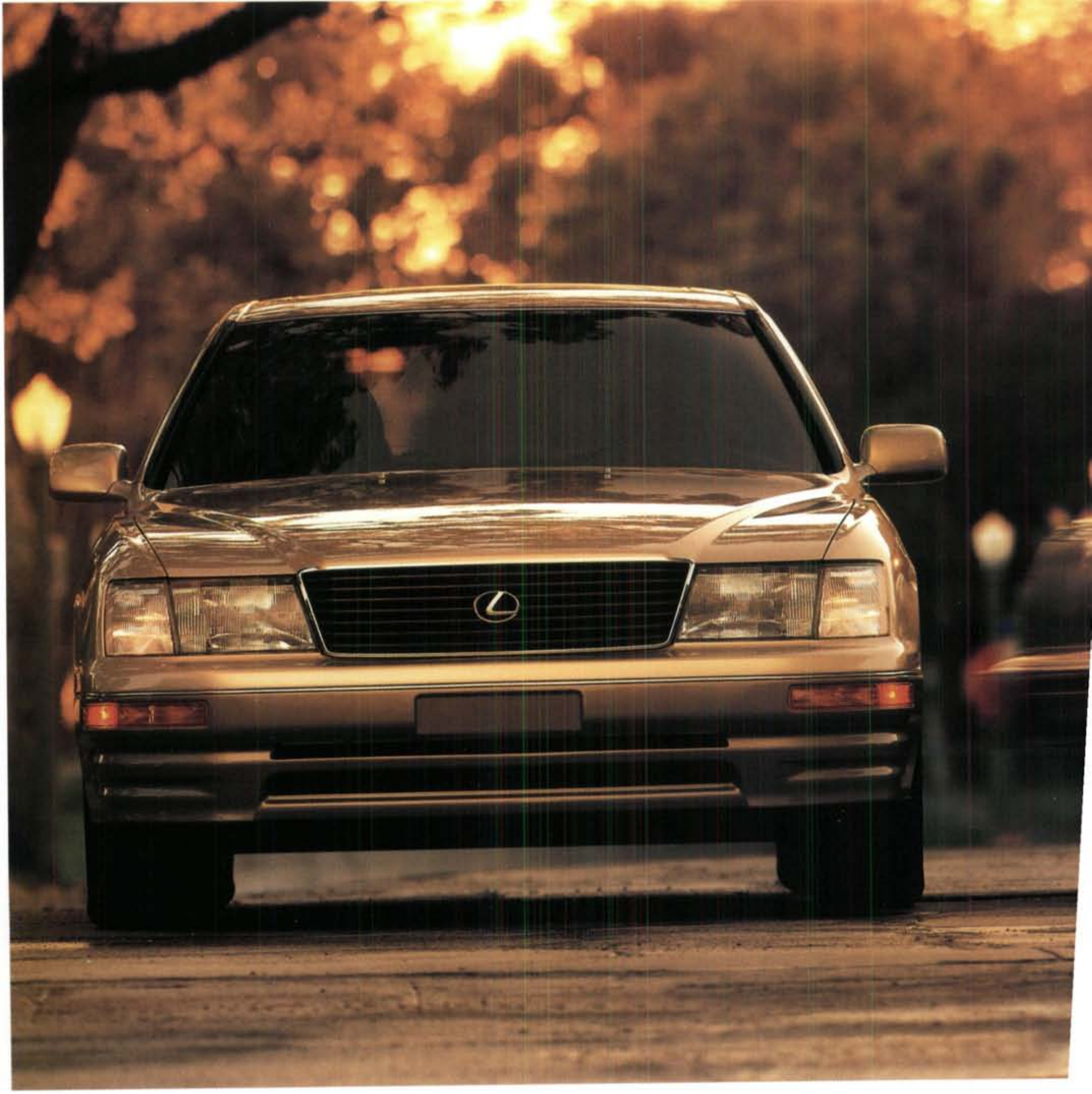

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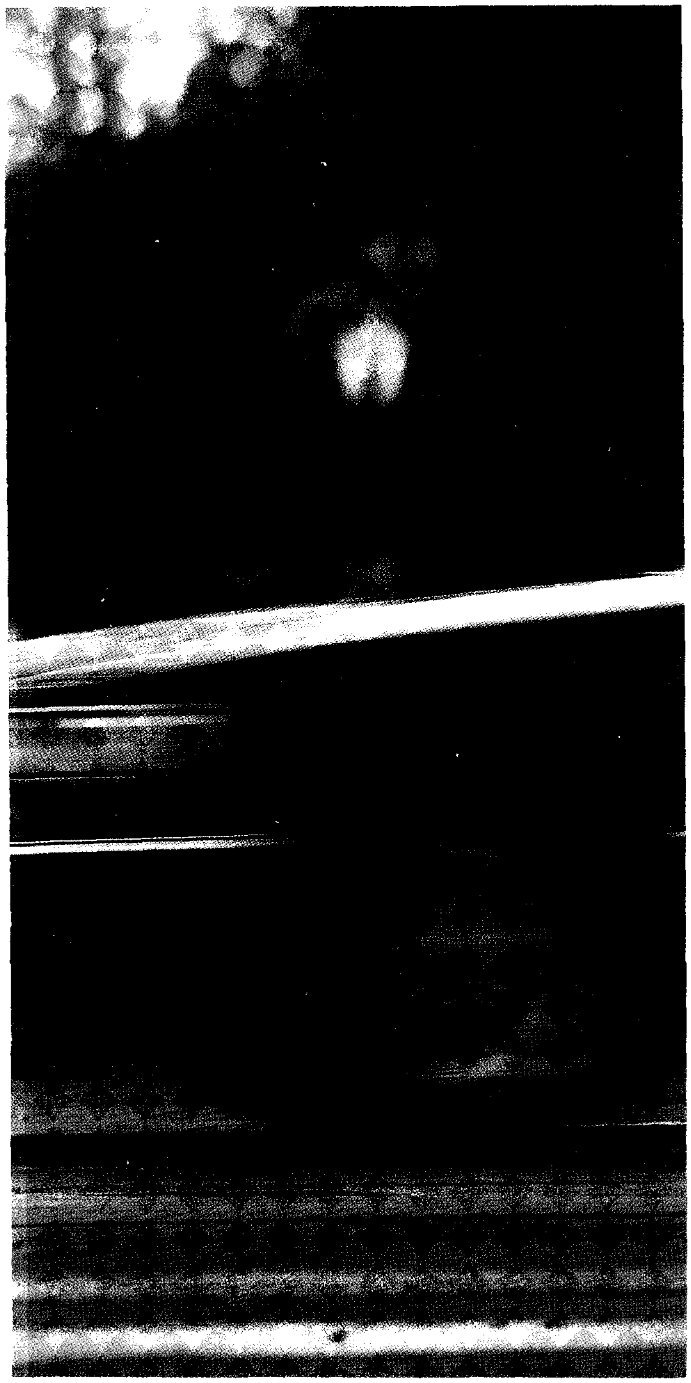

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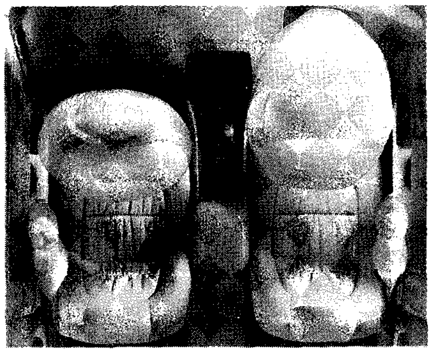

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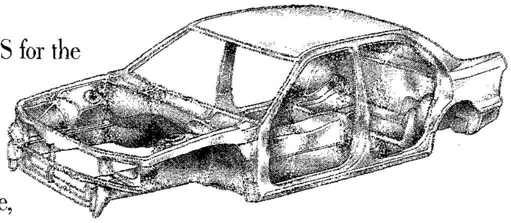

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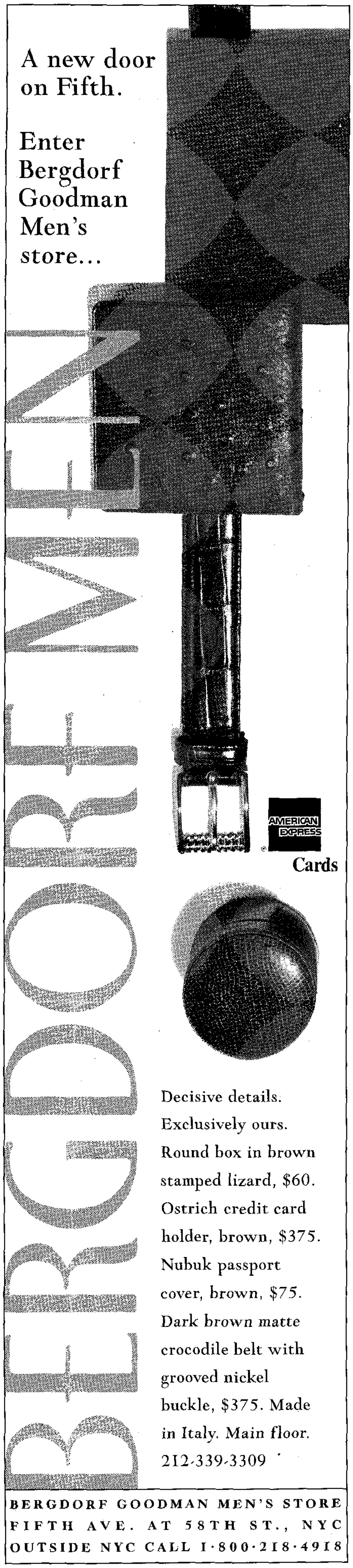

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THE NEW YORKER
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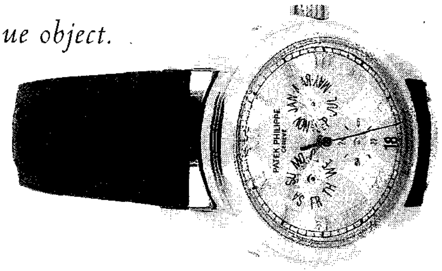

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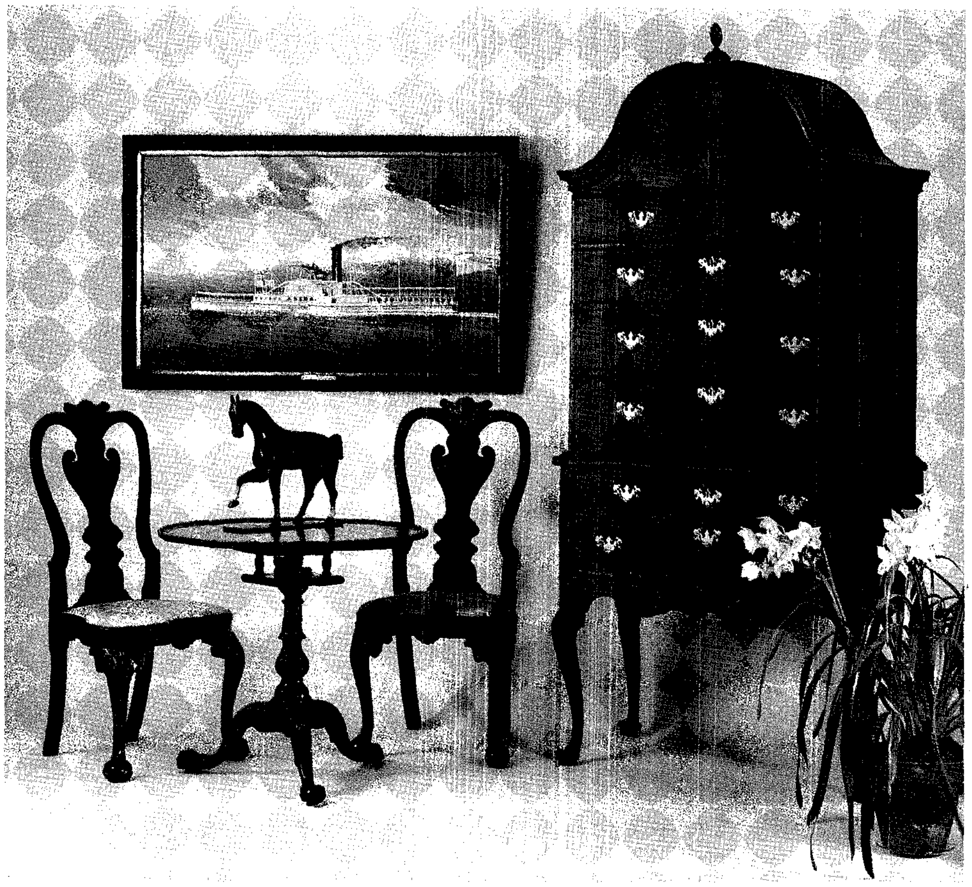

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COMMENT

TODAY'S SPECIAL

Can fiction be nourishing?

HERE is a perfectly reasonable question to ask of a special issue devoted to fiction: Why has it got so much in it about food? By what preposterous reckoning is (for example) a meditation on an Italian bean a literary concern?

A bean, after all, is only a bean: a midget vegetable, an insignificant legume, a no-account seed—usually dried, sometimes frozen, occasionally canned, but seldom fresh, except in the memory of those of us lucky enough to have had grandmothers who tended vegetable gardens in the summer. A poetics of beans? A tragedy, in three acts, of beans? Unlikely. You don't write a poem about a bean; you cook it. You can poach it or pulverize it, boil it or bake it, curd, crush, or curry it, but finally you just eat it, whereupon your bean is no longer a bean. Where's the literature in that?

The food pieces in this issue, like their subjects—beans, bread, grain, meat, water—are humble things. A number of writers were asked to write about food, and what, during this time of turkeys and truffles, could be more seasonally appropriate? But the results were more than seasonally illuminating. Salman Rushdie's account of bread is about bread, but it is also about emigration. From Jonathan Meades's memory of eating whale pie we learn something about the taste of the blubbery behemoth, but we learn more about the habits of the English. And Chang-rae Lee's tale of beans isn't worth beans if what you want to know about is beans, but it does tell us a great deal about Chang-rae Lee.

Stories originate in memory. We make sense of our lives through our senses—through what we see, taste, smell. It is scarcely surprising that storytellers, on being asked to muse about food, come back with stories prompted by the memories and associations that food has evoked for them. It's a lesson in how stories work, and perhaps also a lesson in how stories should be enjoyed—a reminder that well-wrought stories, like well-cooked meals, are there to be relished. Good writing need have no purpose except to delight; need have no moral; need not call us to some higher order. Good fiction will not make you a better person. It will simply arouse your appetites and satisfy them. It will give you pleasure. And that's plenty.

—BILL BUFORD

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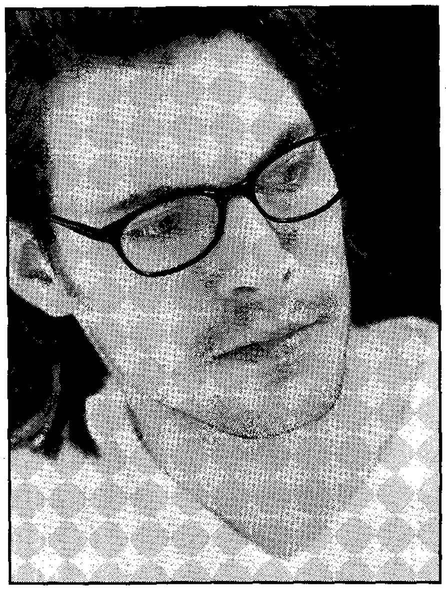

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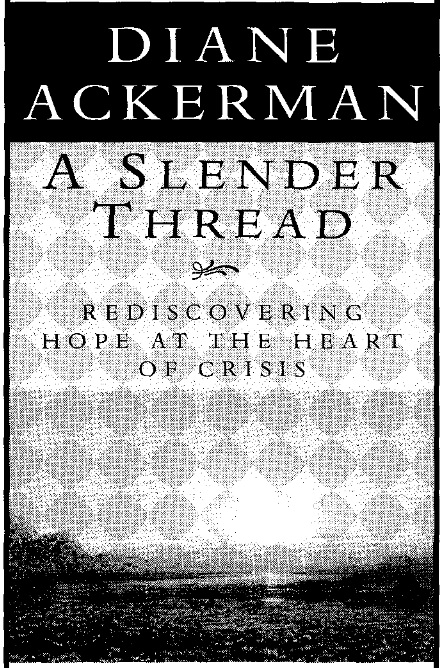

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IN THE MAIL

PARTY TIME

It's astonishing that a writer as sophisticated as James Atlas can't distinguish the spirit of the age from—well, his age ("The Fall of Fun," November 18th). Atlas is discovering, along with the rest of us, that it's hell growing old. The only part of his argument that sounds right is economic. It is probably true that the modestly gifted used to enjoy a higher standard of living than the similarly endowed do today. On the other hand, real talent is far more extravagantly rewarded than it once was.

EPHRAIM A. LEWIS
New York City

Mr. Atlas is right to bemoan the dreary turn that literary life has taken. But while he imagines that writers under forty must be blissfully boozing and carousing, it's really more like this: juggling several meaningless jobs, which leaves little time or energy for creating, let alone socializing; and being disgusted by a publishing industry that demands not brilliant prose (which would be daunting enough, though reasonable) but hit-list fiction that appeals to the least demanding readers. Most of us are wondering when the fun will *begin*.

LELA NARGI
Brooklyn, N.Y.

I was amazed to read James Atlas's romantic evocation of the fun we used to have in the New York literary world. As someone who was a child at those parties where Literary Greats stumbled around lecherously in an opaque cloud of cigarette smoke, I can testify that for those involved—certainly for many wives and most children—that scene was anything but fun.

A tragedy of the generation that came before ours was that many of this country's wonderful writers were also alcoholics. Every drunk—whether or not he or she can write—leaves a trail of destruction, desolation, confusion, and sadness which goes on for generations.

It's certainly true that my father's novels and stories are redolent with romantic images of the perfect Martini and the ideal adultery, but those stories are *fiction*—images created by a man who never found either. Anyone who reads my father's journals can see that his romanticism was a respite from despair, his humor grounded in debilitating pain. "Didn't your father ever cheer up?" people who read the journals ask me.

I'm one of a generation of children who hurry home to their children not out of some fashionable sense of obligation but in a wholehearted attempt to break the terrible chain of defeat and loss left by those amusing literary characters Atlas describes so blithely.

SUSAN CHEEVER
New York City

"The Fall of Fun" perpetuates a fallacy about the late Joe Mitchell. Former friends and colleagues of Mitchell's affirm that, drunk or sober, Joe would not have thrown anything at anyone, let alone an inkwell at his employer, the publisher of the *Herald Tribune*. As Mitchell confirmed when I was writing my book "James Thurber: His Life and Times," he turned up at the *Trib* drunk on a Sunday evening and desecrated Ogden Reid's empty office. "All that white wall in Reid's office," Mitchell often stated, "was too much for a resentful employee holding an inkwell." Mitchell would be embarrassed to be remembered as a hero in the matter.

HARRISON KINNEY
Carmel, N.Y.

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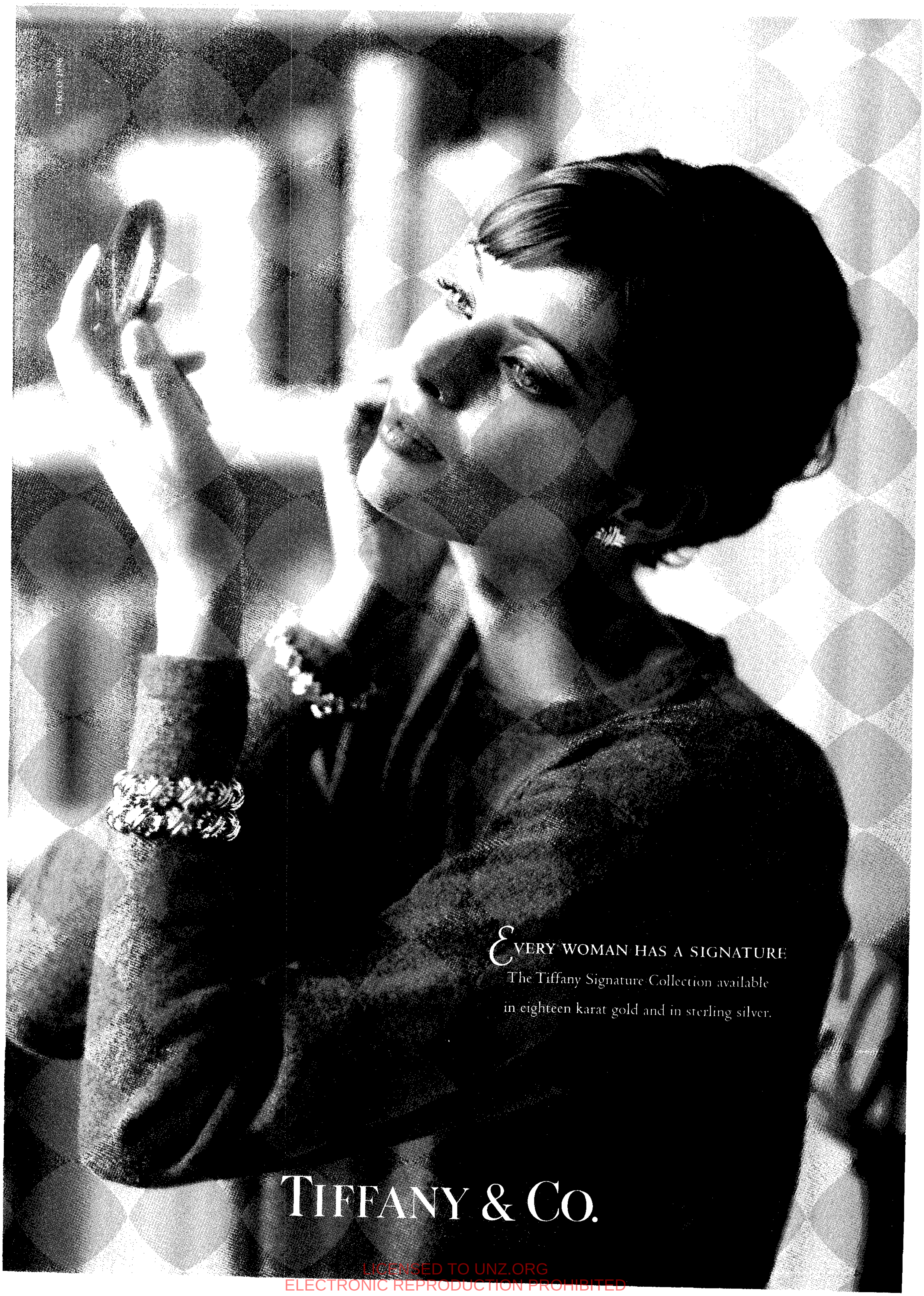©T&Co. 1996
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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Cloud Tectonics—José Rivera's new play is a fairy-tale romance, set in Los Angeles during a torrential rainstorm, in which a pregnant woman searches for the father of her child. Directed by Tina Landau. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Gondoliers—A production of the New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players. Dec. 27 and Dec. 31 at 8, Dec. 28 at 3 and 8, and Dec. 29 at 3. Continues through Jan 5. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

The Merry Muldoons—From the Vineyard Theatre, a family opera (for ages five and up) set in New York in the eighteen-nineties, in which a family of vaudevillians are given chase by a diamond thief. Dec. 21-23 at 12:30 and 3. (Vineyard's 26th St. Theatre, 309 E. 26th St. 353-3874.)

Mummenschanz—The Swiss mime trio kicks off a twenty-fifth-anniversary retrospective tour at Lincoln Center. Opens Dec. 20 at 7:30 and continues through Jan. 4. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050.)

Neat—Charlayne Woodard's new one-woman show, about growing up in the sixties, is a companion to her "Pretty Fire," which she performed here in 1993. Directed by Tazewell Thompson. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

No Way to Treat a Lady—The York Theatre Company begins an all-musical season—its first ever—with a comedy-thriller based on the William Goldman novel of the same title, about a detective in pursuit of an actor turned murderer. Book, music, and lyrics by Douglas J. Cohen. In previews through Dec. 21. Opens Dec. 22 at 7 and continues through Jan 19. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

Once Upon a Mattress—Gerald Gutierrez directs Sarah Jessica Parker in a revival of the 1959 musical, based on "The Princess and the Pea." Two previews on Dec. 18. Opens Dec. 19 at 6:30. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Red Address—A businessman's public persona belies the circumstances of his passionate private life, in a psychological drama by David Ives. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Scapin—Bill Irwin and Mark O'Donnell's adaptation of Molière's comedy "The Rogueries of Scapin," directed by and starring Mr. Irwin, in a Roundabout Theatre Company production. In previews. (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

OPENED RECENTLY

The Barber of Seville—Michael Feingold's new translation of Beaumarchais's comedy, in a Pearl Theatre Company production. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Beat: A Subway Cop's Comedy—John DiResta, New York City transit policeman and standup comic, files a report on his subterranean workplace. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

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A Brief History of White Music—A comic revue by Dee Dee Thomas and David Tweedy, in which an all-black cast interprets the music of Sonny and Cher, the Beach Boys, the Beatles, and other honkies. (Village Gate, 240 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Cakewalk—The subject of Peter Feibleman's play, his twenty-year relationship with Lillian Hellman, is one he's mined before, and his version of the truth is unseemly and self-serving. As Hellman, Linda Lavin gets off some good ones, but she seems almost too healthy, emotionally and physically, to play the poison-filled, self-promoting playwright. Michael Knight, the author's stand-in, is blandly charming and, unlike any writer we know, has the body of a lifeguard. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/18/96.) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Chicago—The long-legged Ann Reinking is the ingénue Roxie Hart, a role she played at one point in the original 1975 production; Bebe Neuwirth is streamlined and sardonic as her man-killer sidekick; and the angular chorus line, in skimpy black, is as stunning and hard-edged as Bob Fosse's dances. Walter Bobbie's bookless, setless revival of the Kander-Ebb-Fosse extravaganza of cynicism (choreographed by Reinking this time around) has enough razzle-dazzle and flashes of lucid sarcasm to set the audience cheering almost from the start. The story is about a woman who gets away with murder; this pared-down concert posing as a full-dress musical may do the same. (11/25/96) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

A Christmas Carol—Tony Randall is Scrooge and Ben Vereen is the Ghost of Christmas Present in a musical version of Dickens's holiday tale. Alan Menken wrote the score. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Through Jan. 5.)

The Cocoanuts—The American Jewish Theatre's revival of the Irving Berlin-George S. Kaufman musical that starred the Marx Brothers in 1925. The songs are pleasant enough, but it's the laugh-out-loud comedy that really scores. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Dreams & Nightmares—Bright lights, bombast, and blaring music, served up by the illusionist David Copperfield in his first Broadway appearance. Some of his tricks are downright amazing, but the show has an awful lot of padding—too much sappy patter and too many comic-erotic poses with babes (who are, of course, silent, this show being the enactment of a man's fantasy life). (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 29.)

Family Values—A sex comedy by the Canadian playwright Carl Ritchie. Daniel Ettinger's set, an apartment awash in chintz, is much more tasteful than the sitcomlike proceedings. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 358-5174.)

Flipping My Wig—Charles Busch drags in the New Year with a new one-woman revue. With music by Dick Gallagher and lyrics by Rusty Magee. (WPA, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!—Gerard Alessandrini cuts a satirical swath through the Great White Way in a new edition of his musical parody. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Full Gallop—The legendary, vividly eccentric fashion editor Diana Vreeland is the subject of Mary Louise Wilson and Mark Hampton's one-woman play, in which Wilson stars. Set in 1971, shortly after Vreeland was fired from *Vogue*, it's very funny and very moving. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

The Heather Woodbury Report; or, What Ever—The performance artist presents the final episode of her one-woman, hundred-odd-character serial comedy on Dec. 18. (Surf Reality, 172 Allen St., between Stanton and Rivington Sts. 673-4182.)

Henry VI, Parts I, II, and III—The New York Shakespeare Festival presents the trilogy in repertory as "Part 1: The Edged Sword" and "Part 2: Black Storm." (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Jan. 5.)

Howard Crabtree's When Pigs Fly—The exuberant designer Howard Crabtree died in June, and this revue of witty, satiric songs (created with and written and directed by Mark Waldrop, and sung by a talented cast dressed in Crabtree's sequinned, feathered, mind-boggling costumes) is a fitting cap to his career. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change—In made-for-musical-theatre voices, the appealing cast of Joe DiPietro and Jimmy Roberts's crowd-pleasing revue about love and marriage sings songs examining made-for-musical-theatre issues. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

The Importance of Being Earnest—This very enjoyable and intimate production of Oscar Wilde's nonpareil comedy marks the designer Tony Walton's New York directorial début, and he has assembled an excellent cast for the occasion. An Irish Repertory Theatre production. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Dec. 22.)

Insurrection: Holding History—Robert O'Hara wrote and directed this new time-travel comedy, set in Southampton, Virginia, during the slave uprising led by Nat Turner. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Dec. 22.)

It's a Slippery Slope—With his new monologue, Spalding Gray uses learning to ski as a metaphor for his plummeting-downhill feelings about fatherhood, leaving his wife after fathering a child with another woman, the death of his own father, and other life "passages." He's so smooth and wry that you absolve him for his crappy behavior, thereby absolving yourself—and that, of course, is where his appeal lies. Sundays and Mondays at the Vivian Beaumont. (Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 6.)

Joseph Gabriel: Magic on Broadway—Mr. Gabriel has performed at the Las Vegas Flamingo Hilton for the past ten years, and his feats are

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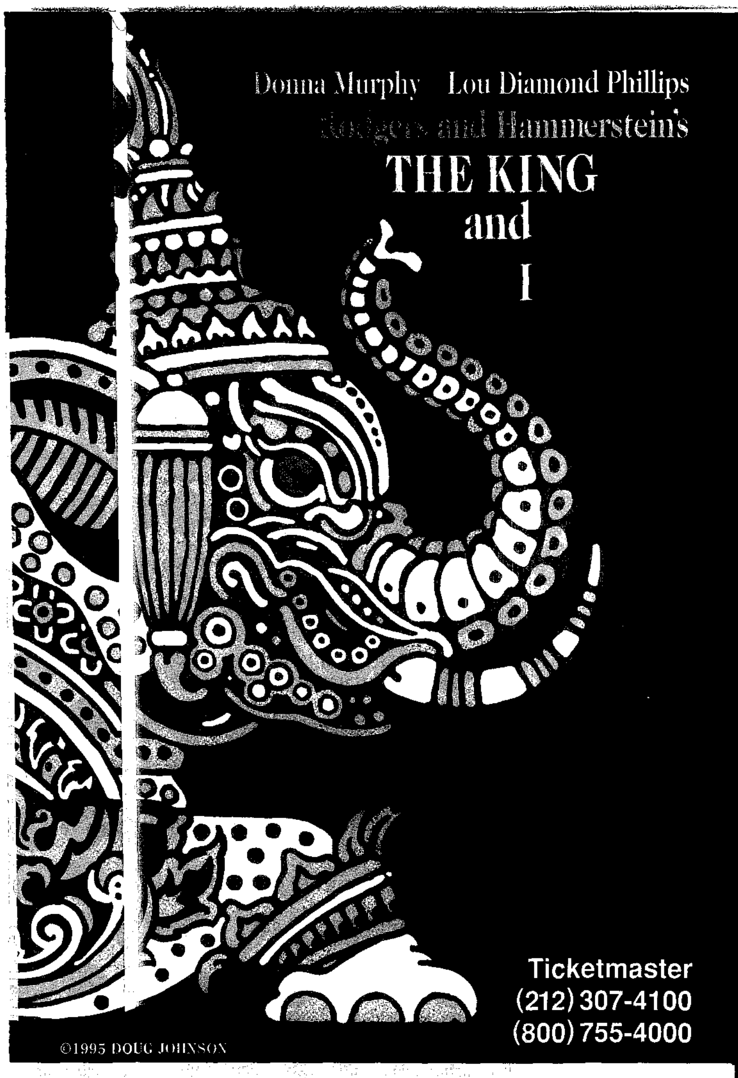

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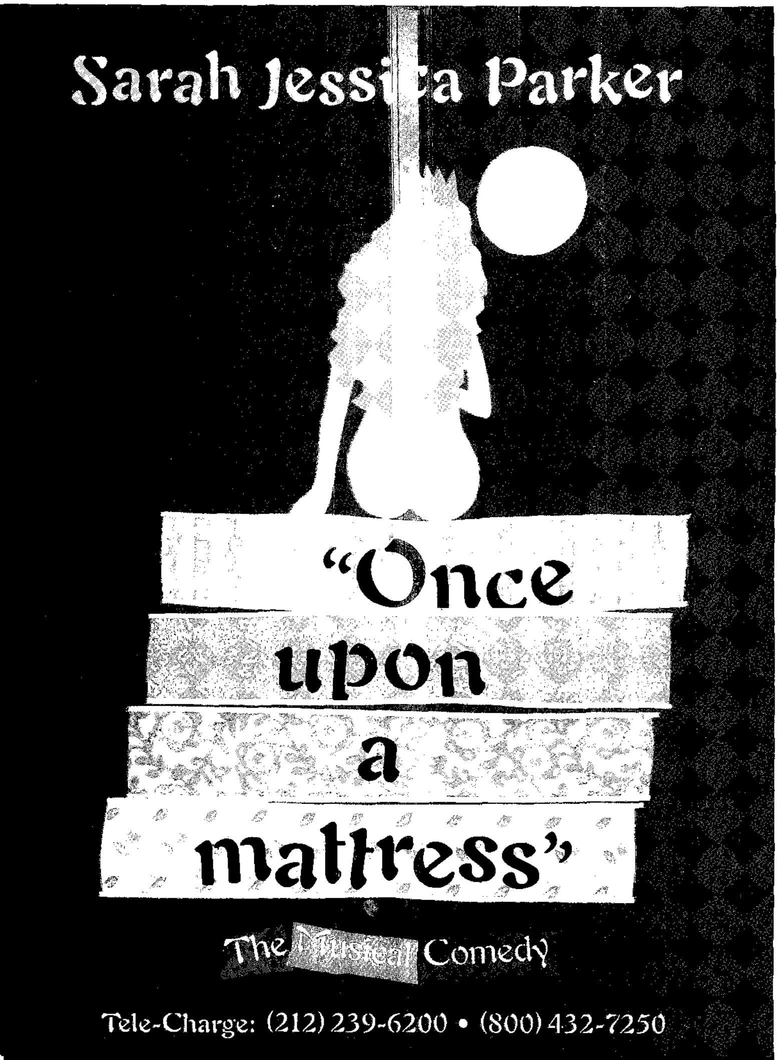

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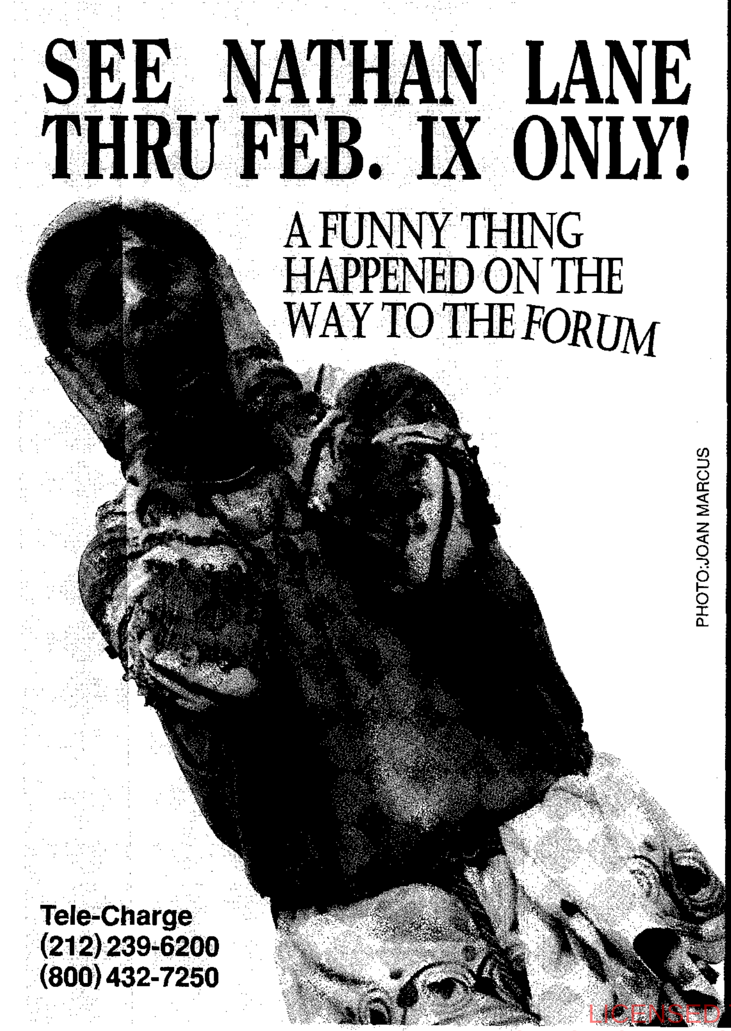

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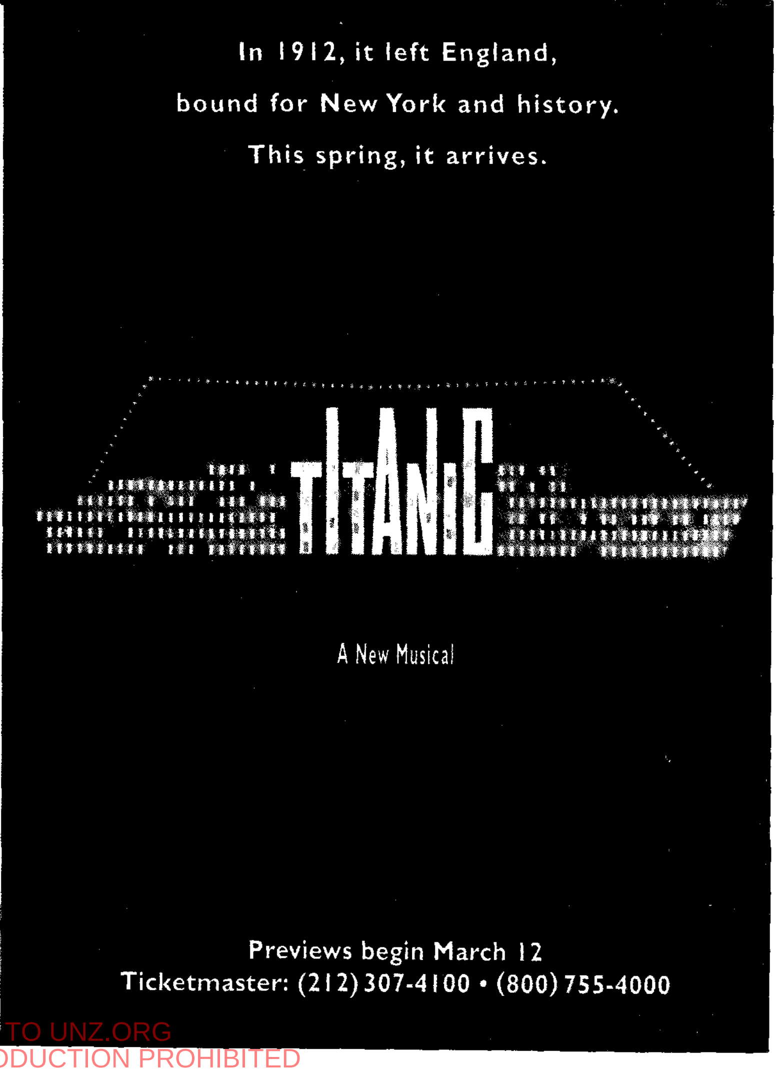

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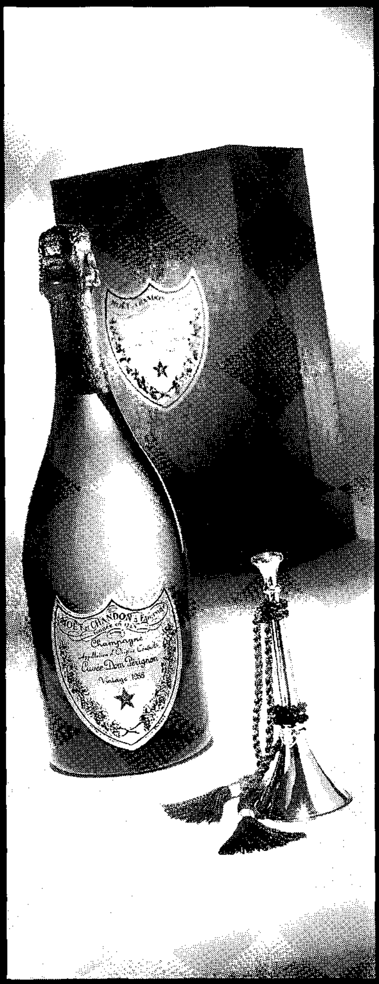
- SHAKESPEARE -



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certainly impressive, but it's all too clear from the trappings of his act—dancers in polka-dotted boxer shorts, a sequinned Elvis—that he hasn't left Nevada behind. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Juan Darién—A production of astonishing inventiveness from Julie Taymor, whose next task is to stage Disney's "The Lion King." She and her collaborator, the composer Elliot Goldenthal, bill their work as a "carnival mass"; based on a tale by the Uruguayan writer Horacio Quiroga (1878-1937), it tells the story of a baby jaguar who becomes human and is then turned back into an animal. Scene by scene, it's as visually moving as theatre can be—Taymor's puppets and masks are highly expressive, in and of themselves and in the expert way they're manipulated, and the sets, co-created by G. W. Mercier, are teeming with life. Yet overall the piece lacks emotional content; if you were a teacher, you'd give it an A+, but you'd take the student aside and say, "Next time, try to put more *feeling* into it." (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 5.)

Late Nite Catechism—Maripat Donovan offers a commandingly funny performance as the lone nun in charge of an adult catechism class, and the audience brings as much to the performance as the script does. (St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

The Maiden of Ludmir—The Folksbiene Playhouse presents a new Yiddish musical by Miriam Hoffman (book and lyrics) and John Clifton (music), based on the life of the nineteenth-century female Torah scholar. (Simultaneous English or Russian translation is available.) (123 E. 55th St. 755-2231.)

Message to Michael—*Another* comedy-drama about gay men searching for love in New York City? If that's your attitude, then Rattlestick Productions' latest staging may not be your cup of tea. All the same, the young playwright Tim Pinckney shows a keen talent for witty dialogue and the well-timed one-liner in a depiction of gay culture which is happier and gentler than some of its predecessors. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 627-2556. Closes Jan. 5.)

Nativity—The Vermont-based Bread and Puppet Theatre draws on Bible stories, circus acts, and the Russian folk drama "The Death of King Herod" as it adapts the Christmas story to its tastes. (Los Kabayitos Puppet Theatre, C.S.V. Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St. 260-4080, ext. 14. Thursdays through Saturdays at 8; Sundays at 3. Through Dec. 22.)

The New Bozena—Three very funny young clowns who approach life with hilarious innocence and touching wonder. One quivers with fear and timidity, one is gape-mouthed and a little slow, and one has a catlike curiosity—although a cat probably wouldn't try out a staple gun on its tongue. (11/18/96) (Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 5.)

Nine Armenians—Leslie Ayvazian's play is a well-worn American-immigrant tale, complete with kids who don't care about the past until a climactic revival of tradition which brings everyone together, but it's humorously told and superbly acted by a cast that includes Michael Countryman, Sophie Hayden, and Kathleen Chalfant. Lynne Meadow directed. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Jan. 12.)

Old Wicked Songs—Jon Marans' well-written piece of sentimental sanctimony asks the question: Can a blocked, arrogant twenty-five-year-old pianist (Justin Kirk) find wisdom under the tutelage of a suicidal singing teacher (Hal Robinson) who survived the Holocaust? (The answer is yes.) (9/16/96) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

O Solo Mio Festival—The New York Theatre Workshop's solo-performance festival this year features works by Emmett Foster and Dael Orlandersmith. (79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes Jan. 5.)

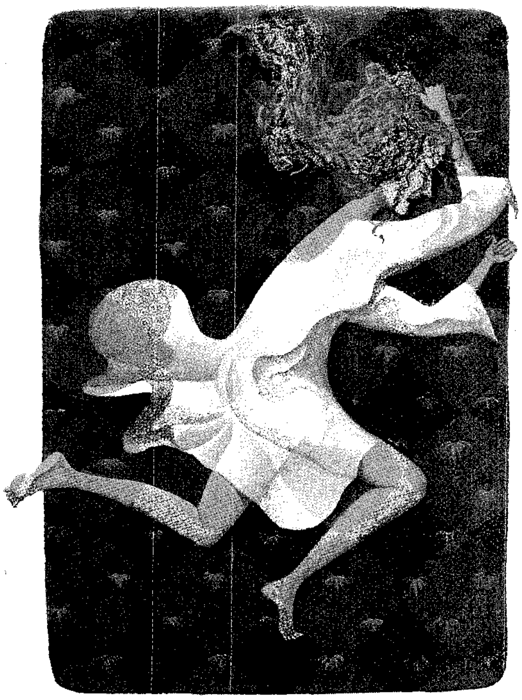
Permanent Brain Damage (Risk It! Risk It!)—The latest musings on human consciousness from Richard Foreman and his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Present Laughter—As the monumentally egotistical West End star Garry Essendine, Frank Langella keeps the core of Noël Coward's 1939 comedy of bad manners alive with a full-tilt assault on the character's outrageousness. Unfortunately, the director, Scott Elliott, seems to think that he's liberating Coward by turning the play into a bisexual romp. But he orchestrates some delicious farce moments, and the supporting players are funny even when Elliott is leading them down blind alleys. (11/25/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Rehearsal—If you have a yen to see a bunch of disparate acting styles on stage at the same time, this production of Jean Anouilh's 1963 farce is for you. Nicholas Martin's rather loosey-goosey direction ends up making a porridge of the play, when a glittering crystal is what's wanted. Though nothing can destroy Anouilh's cleverness, it's frustrating to watch such good actors as Frances Conroy and Roger Rees at anything less than their best. The cast includes David Threlfall and Kathryn Meisle; Jeremy Sams did the translation. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes Jan. 10.)

The Santaland Diaries—The writer David Sedaris has turned his piece about working as an elf at Macy's one Christmas into a monologue, but the material works much better on the page than it does on the stage. Timothy Olyphant is the sardonic elf; Joe Mantello directed this little slip of a show. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 5.)

Sharps, Flats & Accidentals—Dressed like Austrian counts and armed with a brand of humor that time seems to have forgotten, the Flying Karamazov Brothers are back in town, executing amazing feats of juggling with manic "Night at the Opera" charm. This time around, the focus is music, and the foursome performs—while juggling—everything from Bach to W. C. Handy to Cole Porter. It's a gas for both kids and their parents. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 1.)



Sarah Jessica Parker,
in "Once Upon a Mattress."

KATHY OSBORN

Skylight—The playwright David Hare's success and his social conscience are still at odds. This time, the inimitable Michael Gambon plays a successful entrepreneur, and the powerful, appealing Lia Williams is his beloved former mistress, who has given up the lush life to teach the underprivileged. Their differ-

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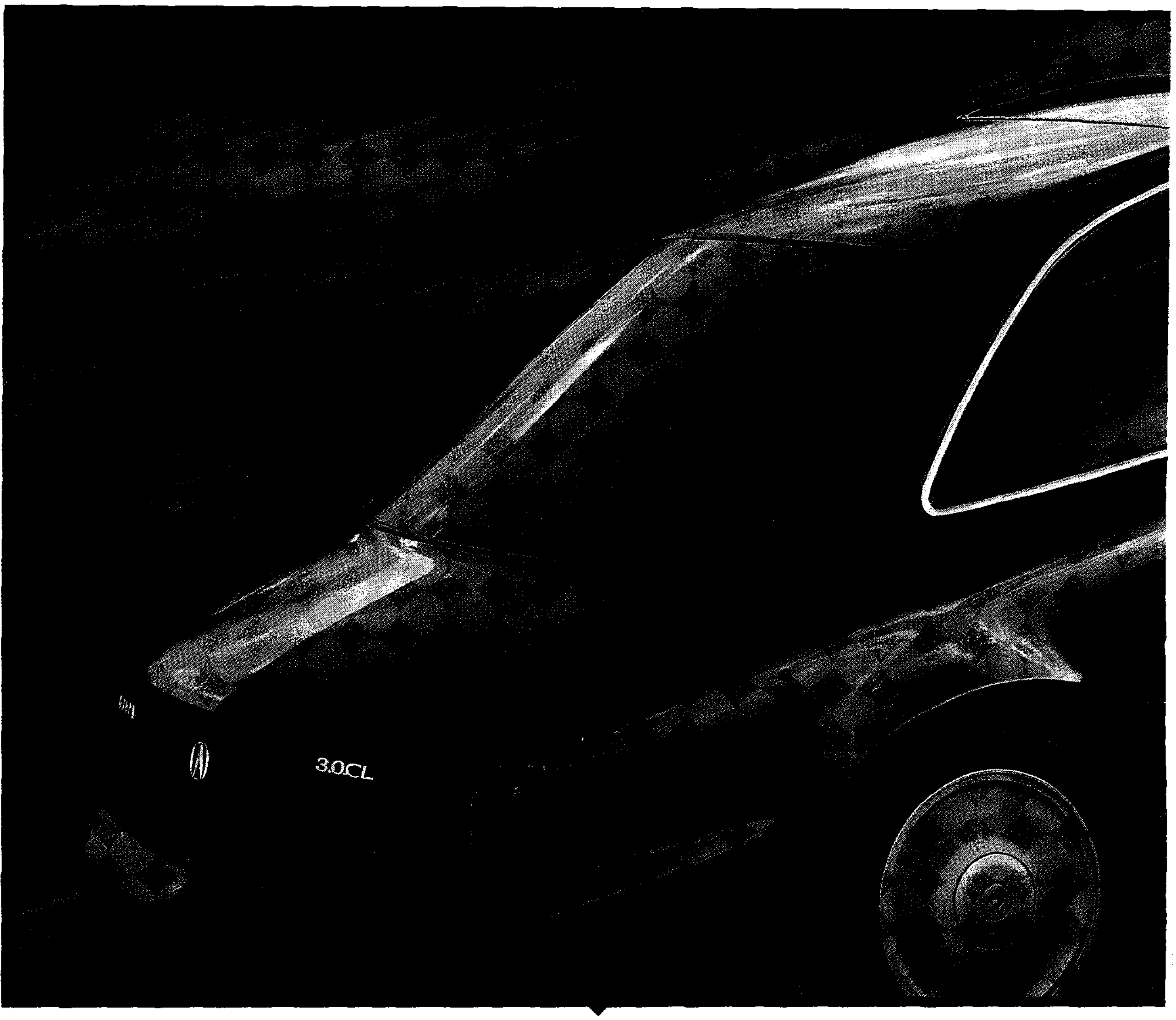

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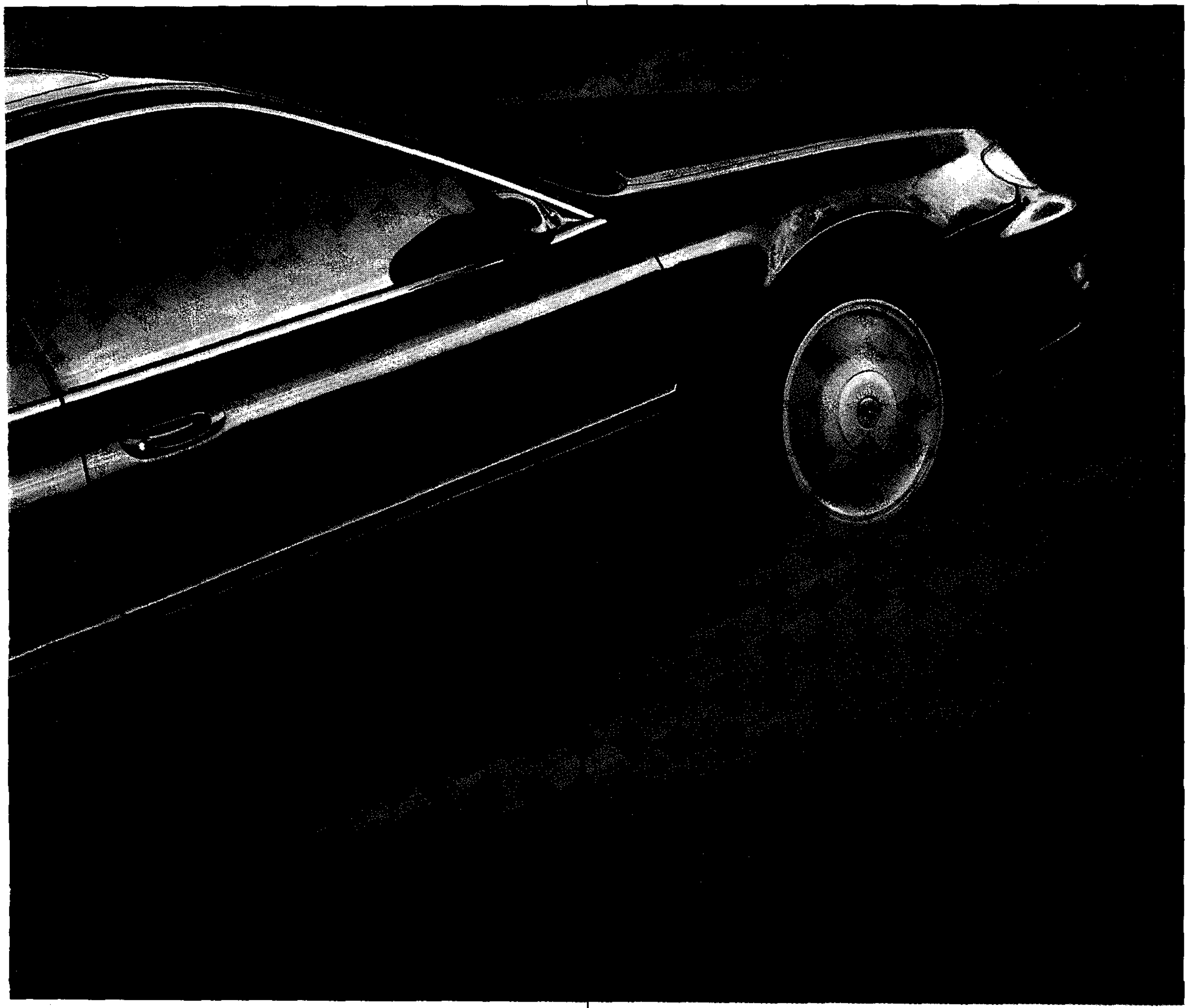

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ences are factored out as systematically as an algebraic equation. (9/30/96) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 29.)

The Springhill Singing Disaster—Karen Trott's one-woman show, which was seen last season at Playwrights Horizons, is an affectionate (but never sappy) coming-of-age story about a girl and her guitar, who are constant companions from the fourth grade on, and it's refreshingly unhip. Trott has a good, folkie voice, but she isn't above sending up her younger off-key self. Directed by Lonny Price. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Taking Sides—Ronald Harwood's play is part fact and part fiction. It stars Daniel Massey as the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler and Ed Harris as an American Army officer who interrogates him about his alleged ties to the Nazis, and its approach to moral complexity is deeply shallow. (11/4/96) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100. Closes Jan. 5.)

Three by Beckett—The Other Theatre presents “Nacht und Träume,” directed by Joseph Chaikin, “Quad I and II,” and “Not I.” (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 332-0967. Closes Dec. 22.)

Tooth of Crime (Second Dance)—Sam Shepard's new version of his 1972 drama about a rock star past his prime, with a new star, Vincent D'Onofrio, and new music, by T-Bone Burnett. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

The Vagina Monologues—Eve Ensler performs her one-woman show about, well . . . (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes Dec. 31.)

Warp—A science-fiction tale, by Stuart Gordon, about a bank teller who finds himself in the fifth dimension. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes Dec. 22.)

The Waste Land—With the assistance of Deborah Warner's direction and Jean Kalman's minimal, evocative lighting, Fiona Shaw makes a rich tapestry of T. S. Eliot's monumental poem, smoothly and believably animating the inhabitants of its “Unreal City” and giving us a glimpse of the whole from which these fragments have fallen. (Liberty, 234 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Jan. 5.)

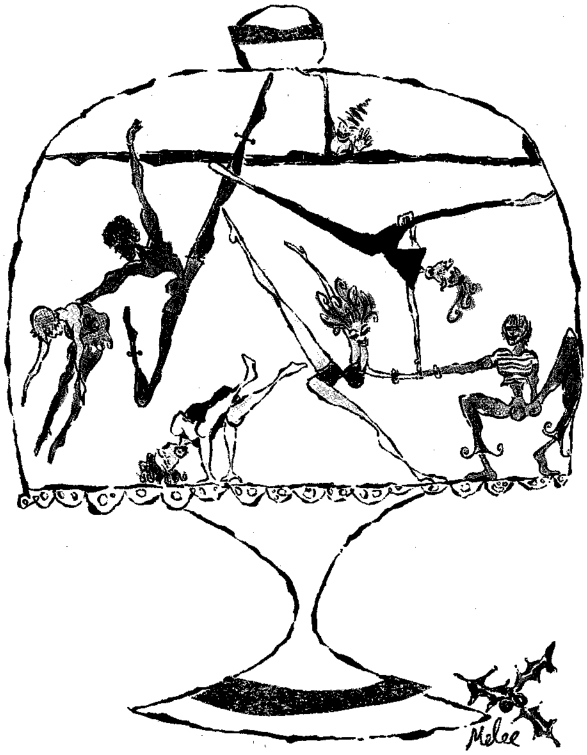
What's a Nice Country Like You Doing in a State Like This?—Cary Hoffman and Ira Gasman's updated version of their 1973 review satirizing society and politics. (Theatre Row Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 5.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **COWGIRLS:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **AN IDEAL HUSBAND:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LOVE THY NEIGHBOR:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. (Closes Jan. 4.) . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. (Closes Jan. 5.) . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

“Fruitcake Follies”—The title is apt: the thirty-six-year-old choreographer Doug Elkins knows how to take a hodgepodge of styles—hip-hop, release work, capoeira, aikido—and whip up something that is, like the fruitcake, both funny and poignant. In “Where Was Yvonne Rainer When I Had Saturday Night Fever?,” for instance, he gives an eighth-grade-style book report on the Judson Church minimalist while his eight-member company discos to such “Soul Train” hits as “Rock Your Baby” and “Ring My Bell”—the music *he* was bumping to during Rainer's choreographic heyday. “It's a way to confess my intellectual crush on choreographers like Rainer and Trisha Brown,” Elkins says, “since I'm too shy to invite them to my dance.” (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Dec. 18-22 and Dec. 26-29 at 8.)



Doug Elkins Dance Company, in “Fruitcake Follies.”

New York City Ballet—With its annual “Nutcracker” enchantment (through Jan. 5), the company returns to the business of inspiring little girls in pigtails to dream of a life *en pointe*. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Dec. 18-19, Dec. 26, and Dec. 30 at 6; Dec. 20 and Dec. 27 at 8; Dec. 21 and Dec. 28 at 2 and 8; Dec. 22 and Dec. 29 at 1 and 5; Dec. 23 at 2 and 6; and Dec. 31 at 7.)

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre—Dec. 18 at 8: “Blues Suite,” “Treading,” “Fandango,” and “Revelations.” . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 8: A program devoted to the works of Judith Jamison—“Riverside,” “Sweet Release,” and “Hymn.” . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 8: “Night Creature,” “Urban Folk Dance,” “Vespers,” and “Suite Otis.” . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 2: “Fathers and Sons,” “Cavalcade,” and “Revelations.” . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 8: “Blues Suite,” “Cry,” “Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder,” and “Revelations.” . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 3: “Polish Pieces,” “Sweet Release,” and “Suite Otis.” . . . ¶ Dec. 22 at 7:30: “Night Creature,” “Urban Folk Dance,” “Vespers,” and “Revelations.” . . . ¶ Dec. 24 at 8: “Sweet Release,” “Cavalcade,” and “Revelations.” . . . ¶ Dec. 25 at 8: “Suite Otis,” “Fandango,” and “Revelations.” . . . ¶ Dec. 26 at 8: “For Bird—with Love,” “Fandango,” and “Revelations.” . . . ¶ Dec. 27 at 8: “For Bird—with Love,” “Cry,” and “Revelations.” . . . ¶ Dec. 28 at 2: “Memoria,” “Shelter,” and “Suite Otis.” . . . ¶ Dec. 28 at 8: “Polish Pieces,” “Cry,” “Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder,” and “Hymn.” . . . ¶ Dec. 29 at 3: “Memoria,” “Fathers and Sons,” and “Cavalcade.” . . . ¶ Dec. 29 at 7:30: “Blues Suite,” “Cry,” “Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder,” and “Revelations.” . . . ¶ Dec. 31 at 8: “Suite Otis,” “Sweet Release,” and “Revelations.” (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Through Dec. 31.)

Momix—At fifteen, this Pilobolus offspring is sexier than its progenitor, and like many teens, sometimes given to incomprehensible behavior. For example, the company's “Classics” program, which opens a three-week engagement, includes three premières. However, its second program, “Passion,” lives up to its title. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. “Classics”: Dec. 17-20 and Dec. 23 at 8, Dec. 21 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 22 at 2 and 7:30. . . . ¶ “Passion”: Dec. 26 at 8, Dec. 27-28 at 7 and 10, and Dec. 29 at 2 and 7:30. . . . ¶ “Baseball”: Dec. 30-31 at 8. Through Jan. 5.)

“After Eros”—When X-rays presented evidence of a spinal injury that doctors said should have put her in a wheelchair, the choreographer Maureen Fleming asked her mother for more information about a childhood injury she had suffered outside an American Navy base in Japan. “A man on a bicycle darted in front of my mother's car,” Fleming says. “And when my head went through the windshield, the man laughed and rode away.” The choreographer could not recall the incident, but she did remember inventing a type of slow and sinuous dance as a child—a twisting movement that doctors said kept mobility in joints that otherwise would have needed to be surgically fused. Though Fleming returned to Japan as an adult to further explore this slow, healing movement with Butoh masters, its instinctive origins remain something of a mystery—a mystery she has commemorated by naming this program with an allusion to the man who, with a laugh, rode off, like Eros. “It's a feminine response,” she says. “Not ‘I have to find this man' but something more regenerative: facing one's pain instead of running away.” (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. For information about tickets, call 996-1100. Dec. 21 at 8 and Dec. 22 at 3 and 8.)

“Beware of Dog”—New Zealander Jeremy Nelson and Venezuelan Luis Lara present separate works inspired by Old Master paintings. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Dec. 19-22 at 8:30.)

“Let's Dance”—Doug Varone first learned big-band-era dances as a kid in the sixties, when his parents used to barge in on his basement gatherings and give impromptu social-dance seminars; Varone and his friends called them “Steve and Edie parties.” When the ancestral rug-cutters saw last year's première of “Let's Dance” (now expanded to a full-length cabaret show), they were moved by the choreographer's updated versions of their Lindy-hop, jitterbug, and mambo steps. “Over the long haul of my career,” says Varone, a former Lar Lubovitch dancer, “I think it finally dawned on them how much influence they had on me.” (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Dec. 18 and Dec. 22 at 8:30 and Dec. 19-21 at 8:30 and 10:30.)

“The Yorkville Nutcracker”—In his version of the Tchaikovsky ballet—here set in a Gilded Age Gracie Mansion—the choreographer Frances Patrelle enlists Lourdes Lopez as the Sugar Plum Fairy and Jock Soto as her Cavalier. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Dec. 19 at 7, Dec. 20 at 8, and Dec. 21 at 2 and 8.)

ROBERT MELEE

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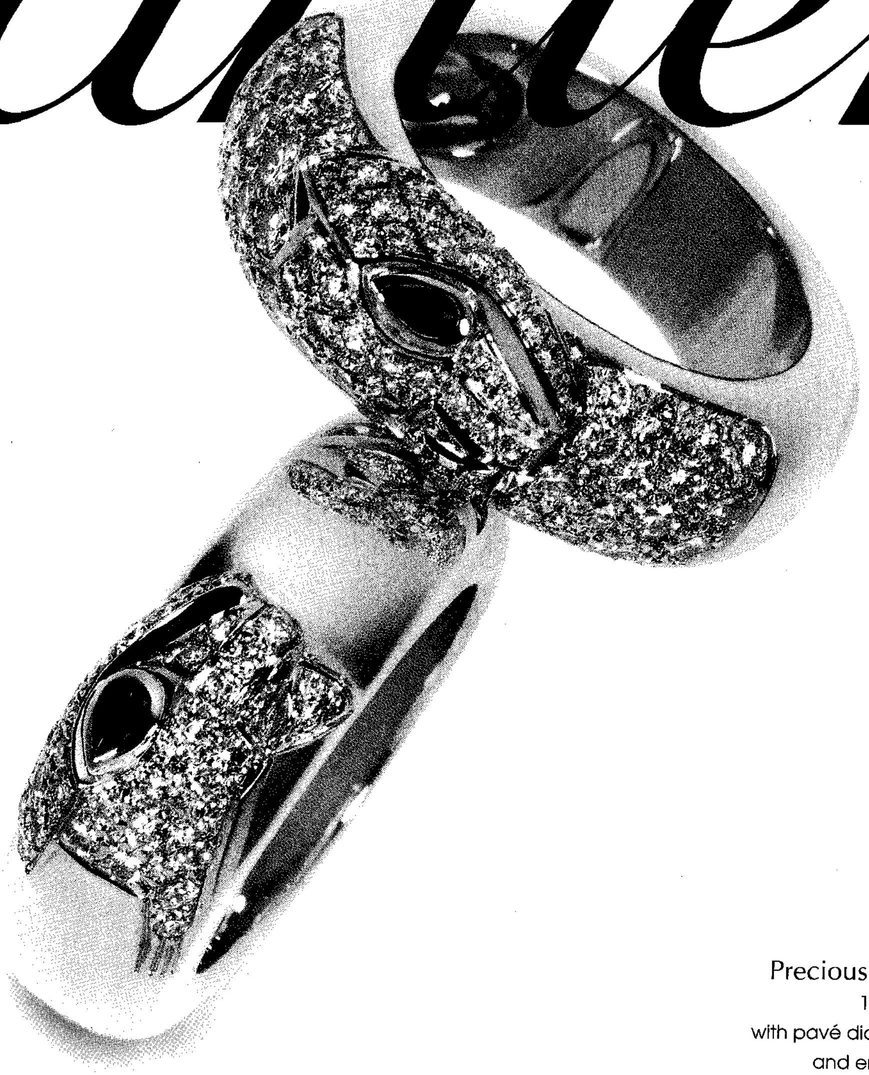

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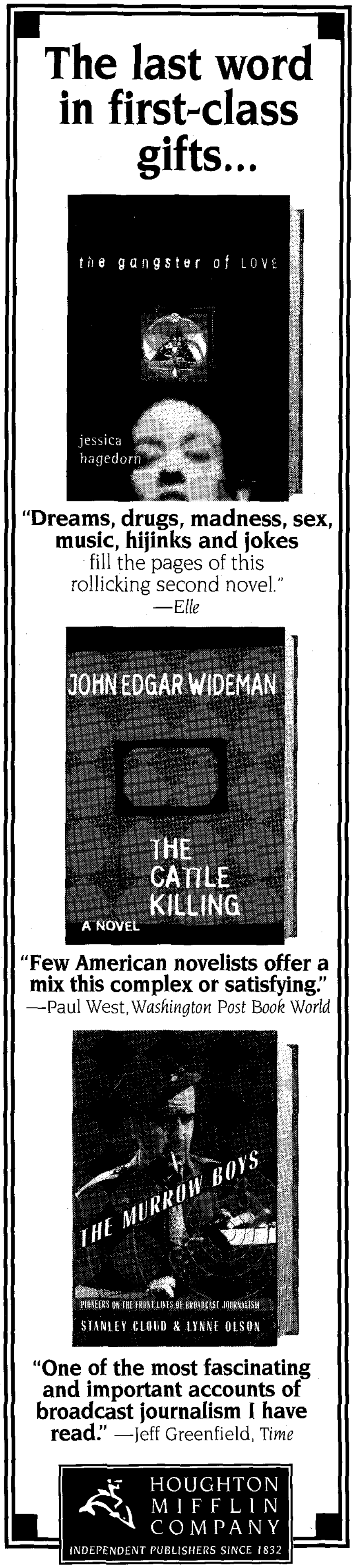

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NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

LaVern Baker—The electrifying blues singer, who had been out of commission for some time, has been back onstage for two years now, and she's not stopping soon. (See Chicago B.L.U.E.S.) (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Dec. 23 at 8.)

David Broza—The Israeli pop star. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Dec. 24 at 8:30.)

Luscious Jackson—A decidedly New Yawk group of women whose raucously ebullient blend of hip-hop and bluesy pop makes it impossible to pigeonhole them as either a girl group or a grrrls group. (Roxy, 515 W. 18th St. 307-7171. Dec. 28 at 8:15.)

Kiss—The fact that Kiss and the Village People have both enjoyed high-profile comebacks speaks volumes about the true legacy of seventies pop. But, unlike the Village People, Kiss never got its own joke—which is probably why Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons can keep wagging their respective tongues and rears with such shameless glee. On this much-ballyhooed reunion tour, during which the band has donned makeup and codpieces for the first time since the early eighties, original members Peter Criss and Ace Frehely are once again along for the ride. (Nassau Coliseum. 516-794-9300. Dec. 29 at 8. . . . ¶ *Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands.* 212-307-7171. Dec. 31 at 9.)

Blues Traveler—These four guys from Princeton have been playing in New York since 1987, and over the past few years they've become an honest-to-God phenomenon. The Beatles in Hamburg they're not, but they have amassed a rabidly devoted following. Like the Dead, to whom they're often compared, they write leisurely, meandering tunes punctuated with extended solos. On record, they're intolerable; live, they're excellent. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Dec. 31 at 8.)

Jane Ira Bloom, Ruben Blades, and **Dakota Staton**—The accomplished soprano saxophonist, the Panamanian-born poet laureate of salsa, and the veteran singer, in a First Night celebration. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-2200. Dec. 31 at 8.)

Barenaked Ladies—Five fully clothed Canadian guys, actually. Their first album, "Gordon" (1992), featured jaunty, eccentrically folkie songs that were tender, funny, and free of irony, and that covered such subjects as enduring life in the ninth grade and "lying in bed just like Brian Wilson" during a creative slump. On their most recent record, "Maybe You Should Drive," the emotions are closer to the surface, the whimsy wryer, and the music lusher—thanks to the production by Ben Mink, K. D. Lang's collaborator on "Ingénue." This show should provide a blast of wit and warmth from north of the border. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Dec. 31 at 8:45.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Dec. 19-20: Legendary singer-songwriter **KARLA BONOFF.** Dec. 21-22: Clear-voiced and clear-eyed singer-songwriter **DAR WILLIAMS,** another stunner from a growing list of smart, gifted women who are redefining folk music in the nineties. She's followed up last year's fine début, "The Honesty Room," with the recently released—and just as fine—"Mortal City." Dec. 23: Christmas with sometime Hot Tuna maverick **JORMA KAUKONEN.** Dec. 27-28: **RONNIE SPECTOR'S HOLIDAY PARTY.** Dec. 29: **JOHNNY WINTER, RICK DERRINGER,** and their bands. The three-woman operation called **BETTY** settles in on Dec. 31 with a sort of cabaret gone haywire, an act that contains elements of funk, performance art, satire, and standup comedy and moves along at an amphetamine pace. With the Canadian pop band **MOXY FRUVOUS.**

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Dec. 26: Local rockers **XANAX 25.** Dec. 31: The dark, spooky pop of **CONGO NORVELL** and guests.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. Dec. 20-21: The **KINSEY REPORT.** One of the better modern-blues combos, this funky family (their father is Big Daddy Kinsey, one of the original Mississippi Delta bluesmen) easily shuffles rock, R. & B., and reggae into its music. Dec. 27: Former David Letterman guitarist **HIRAM BULLOCK.** Dec. 28: Blues torch-bearer **LA VERN BAKER.** (See Concerts.) Dec. 31: **BUDDY MILES** stands alone: no other musician's résumé can boast stints with both Jimi Hendrix and the California Raisins. Now that's a career.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Dec. 20: Hirsute guitar god **STEVE VAI** entertains the kids. Dec. 26-27: **GOD STREET WINE.** Dec. 30-31: **MACEO PARKER** honed his chops working with James Brown in the sixties and Parliament-Funkadelic in the seventies. In between those earthshaking gigs, the tenor saxophonist put out some funk of his own in the form of Maceo & All the King's Men, establishing his prowess as a bandleader.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-4064)—Dec. 21: **CHRIS WHITLEY.** With the Health & Happiness Show. Dec. 27-28: **LUNA.** Led by Harvard grad Dean Wareham, who drove Galaxie 500 to college-rock greatness, this New York quartet makes a dreamy kind of music that's so frankly derivative it's both disposable *and* eternal. Dec. 31: **YO LA TENGO.**

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Dec. 23: **PROFESSOR AND MARYANN.** Like their "Gilligan's Island" namesakes, this precocious Staten Island duo balances the cerebral (courtesy of guitarist-songwriter Ken Rockwell) with dark good looks (from helium-throated singer Danielle Brancaccio). Dec. 31: **LUNA.** (See Maxwell's.)

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Dec. 27: Master African drummer **BABA OLATUNJI** brings his inspired ten-piece ensemble, Drums of Passion, in for the evening. Dec. 30: **JOHNNY PACHECO.** A dance party featuring the soca king **ARROW** fills the house on Dec. 31. Dining.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

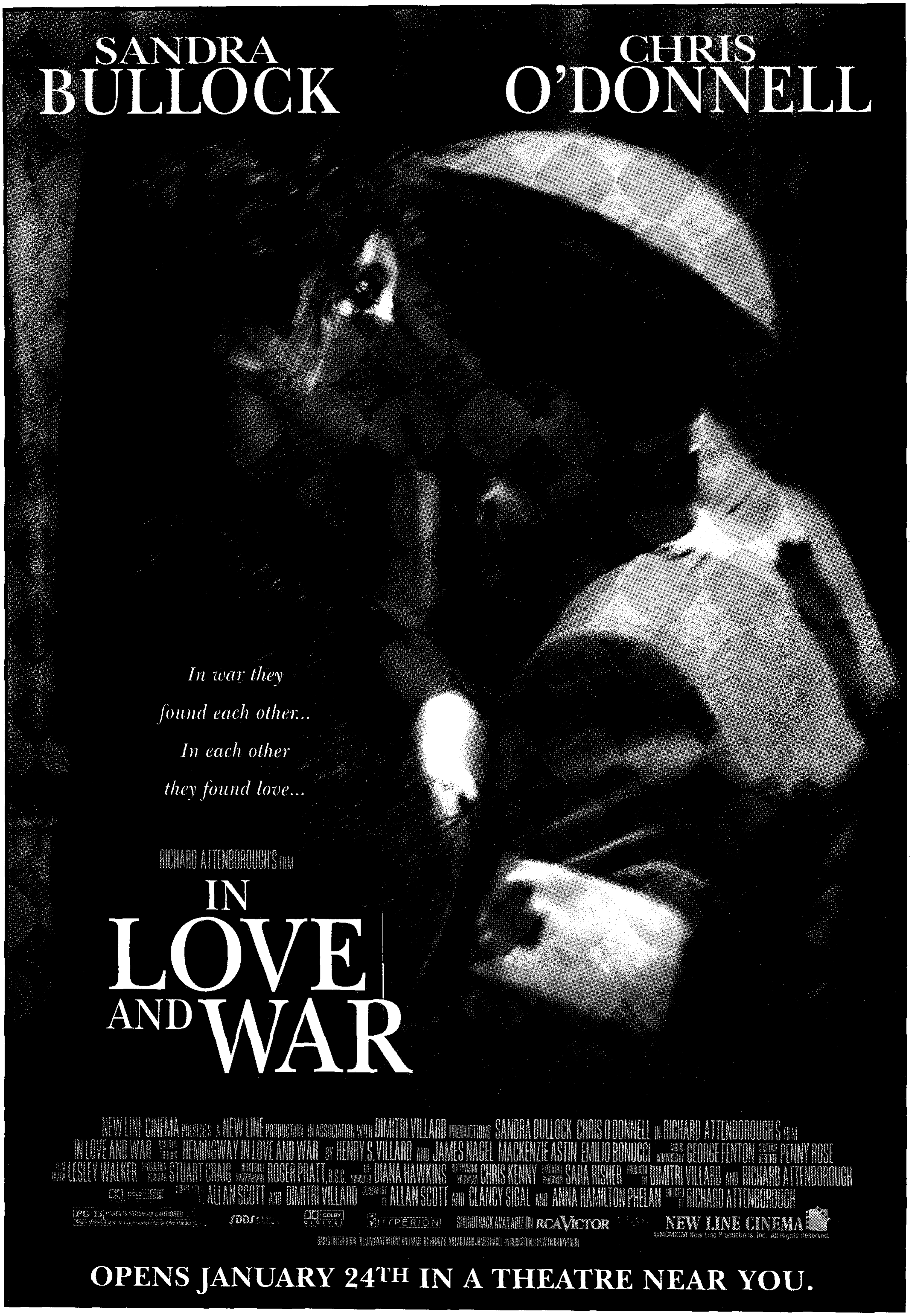
Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **ANDREA MARCOVICCI** is currently in the midst of an extended run. Dining.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Dec. 18-21: The **TONY WILLIAMS** trio. Williams revolutionized modern jazz drumming with Miles Davis's groups in the sixties; these days he plays extra loud just in case you might have forgotten his contributions. Bombast aside, he's still a marvel; but can you ever really trust any drummer who once titled an album "Ego"? Dec. 19 at 6: Trumpeter **JON FADDIS,** left-handed trombonist **SLIDE HAMPTON,** and saxophonist **JIMMY HEATH.** Dec. 26: **HILTON RUIZ** is equally at home with both Latin music and jazz. The unsung hero of innumerable groups from the past two decades, he deserves serious appreciation for his own dexterous piano work. Dec. 31: Guitarist **HIRAM BULLOCK** slides uptown from Chicago B.L.U.E.S. for a party with bassist **WILL LEE.** Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Dec. 18-22: Guitarist-vocalist **JOHN PIZZARELLI** hosts a Christmas-flavored show with the Don Sebesky orchestra. Dec. 24-29: Saxophonist **DAVID SANBORN.** Dec. 31: Sanborn performs on a bill with singer **PATTI AUSTIN** and pianist **ALEX BUGNON.** Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—At the Café Carlyle, through New Year's Eve, the great **BOBBY SHORT.** Time has not diminished the tasteful virtuosity of Short's ivory-tinkling, nor has it taken the edge off his gregarious wit as a singer and showman. A fixture at the Carlyle, he can still spin an Ira Gershwin lyric with all the sophistication, humor, and pathos it deserves. Also well served are gems by Duke Ellington, Dorothy Fields, Irving Berlin, and, of course, Cole Porter. A de-lightful, de-lovely evening. . . .¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Dec. 20: **MYRA MELFORD** has listened to more than her share of Cecil Taylor, but she balances her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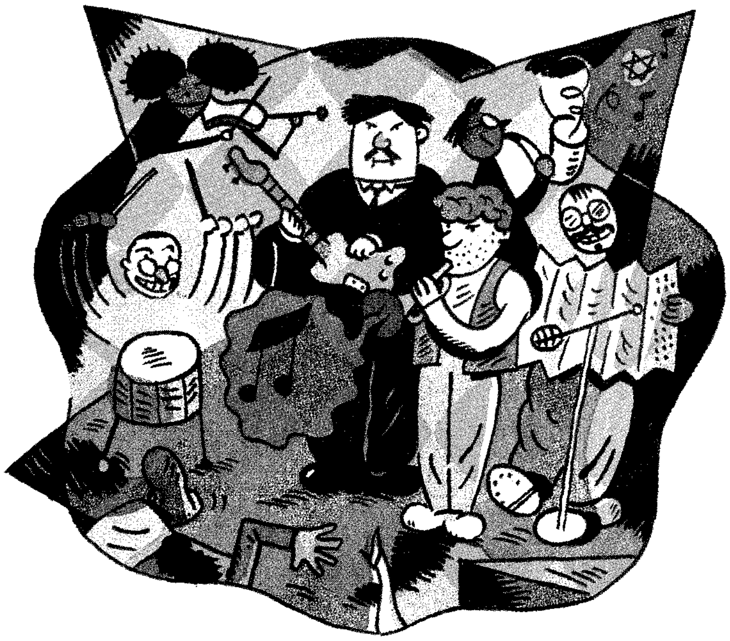
piano pummelling with exacting formal ploys. Her band includes downtown trumpeter par excellence Dave Douglas. Dining.

The Greatest Bar on Earth, 1 World Trade Center (524-7000)—Hyperbole, perhaps, but it's certainly the highest. And Thursdays through Saturdays you'll find live music, dancing, and dining, a hundred and seven stories above the city. Dec. 19-21, Dec. 26-28, and Dec. 31: The **FLYING NEUTRINOS.** This itinerant New Orleans jazz band—its members grew up in the Big Easy, took a brief detour through Europe, and wound up adrift in the East River on a homemade paddleboat—is a family affair. Cousins Ingrid Lucia, twenty-six, and Todd Londagin, twenty, lead the group: Lucia's sassy patter and mischievous grin are a lot like Billie Holiday's, and wonder boy Todd plays trombone, tap-dances, and has a disarming Chet Baker-like voice.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Trumpeter **FREDDIE HUBBARD** may not have the chops he had three decades ago when he extended Clifford Brown's legacy into the stratosphere of modal hard bop, but there's still enough heart, soul, and smarts left in his playing to summon up memories of his championship seasons. An all-star group of Hubbard veterans will be on hand to cheer on their former boss. Starting Dec. 31: The lithe, intuitive R. & B. stylings of singer **RUTH BROWN.** Dining.



The Klezmatics, at the Knitting Factory.

MARC ROSENTHAL

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Dec. 19: The **GREG COHEN** sextet, the **THOMAS CHAPIN** quartet, and **BABKAS.** Cohen is a superbly inventive and supportive bassist, comfortable in just about any genre, a virtue apparent to band leaders as diverse as John Zorn and Woody Allen. Virtuosic saxophonist and flutist Chapin has a seasoned and responsive group that can follow his inside/outside inclinations. Babkas, a guitar-saxophone-drums trio, weaves roots music into its avant mix. Dec. 20: Klezmer music can bring out the goofball in some instrumentalists; in the case of the **KLEZMATICS,** it happens en masse. They inject left-of-center mirth into an already mirthful music, but they also have the musicianship to back up their attitude, which is half downtown, half shtetl. Dec. 31: Funk with the **GROOVE COLLECTIVE.**

Maxim's, 680 Madison Ave., at 61st St. (751-5111)—In 1985, Pierre Cardin spent millions to open this mock-nineteenth-century bistro, which features stained glass, bevelled mirrors, and inlaid ceilings. But the eighties ended, and the club went dark for five years. A new management has revamped the menu, lowered the prices, and "done away with the dress code." Dec. 20-21, Dec. 27-28, and Dec. 31: **ANN HAMPTON CALLAWAY.** Dining.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Hear her roar: **HELEN REDDY** is in the house through early January.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night. Dec. 18: The **SAM YAHEL** quartet, featuring **ERIC ALEXANDER.** Yahel mans the electric organ; Alexander's a bruising tenor saxophonist. Together they keep the great jazz-blues-funk mélange of the sixties alive. Dec. 27-28: One of the most dependable bebop pianists on the scene, **MICHAEL WEISS** has been heard to great effect with saxophonist Johnny Griffin—and if you can keep up with that pile driver your credentials are firmly in place. Dec. 31: The **JASON LINDNER** ensemble.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Dec. 17-22: Pianists don't come any more swinging than **RAY BRYANT.** Imagine Oscar Peterson's technique and Erroll Garner's buoyancy mated with an authentic feel for the blues. Bryant's an original and a pleasure to hear. Dec. 24-29: The **KENNY GARRETT** quartet. Starting Dec. 31: The **NAT ADDERLEY** quintet. Dining.

Village Gate, 240 W. 52nd St. (307-5252)—Through Dec. 21: The **ROY GERSON** quartet finishes up a two-week run. Dec. 26-28: The **ED POLCER** quartet. Dec. 31: The consummate vibraphonist **LIONEL HAMPTON** swings the mallets with a new sixteen-piece orchestra and vocalist Sacha Dallton, in a tribute to Dinah Washington. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Dec. 18-22: The **KENNY BARRON** quartet. Barron turns every set into a lesson in unmannered, eloquent improvisation. He may be the most sympathetic accompanist around, but under the spotlight he's a star. Dec. 24-29: **CEDAR WALTON AND THE EASTERN REBELLION.** A marvellous pianist, composer, and group leader, Walton makes consistently thoughtful, definitively swinging music with trios, although the Rebellion is a quartet—filled out with bassist David Williams, saxophonist Vincent Herring, and drummer Kenny Washington. Starting Dec. 31: **DR. MICHAEL WHITE'S ORIGINAL LIBERTY JAZZ BAND OF NEW ORLEANS.** Let purists debate the validity of this outfit's approach to the music of Armstrong, Morton, and Dodds. White's band positively revels in the conventions of collective improvisation, counterpoint, and the two-beat stomp; its glee turns history into something vividly sensual. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Masterpieces in Little: Portrait Miniatures from the Collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II." Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ The largest exhibition of the master landscape painter Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot mounted in more than a hundred years. Through Jan. 19. . . . ¶ "Eugène Cuvelier, Photographer in the Circle of Corot," an exhibit of salted-paper prints from the eighteen-fifties and -sixties. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ The cynosure of a large exhibition surveying the career of the Scottish architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) must certainly be the restored Ladies' Luncheon Room from Miss Cranston's Ingram Street Tea Rooms, in Glasgow. Through Feb. 16. . . . ¶ "Queen Nefertiti and the Royal Women" presents narrative reliefs and sculptures from Egypt's Amarna period (1353-1336 B.C.). Through Feb. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, except Christmas, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The Jasper Johns retrospective features two hundred and twenty-five works—paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures—and naturally includes a few flags, targets, numerals, and cross-hatch patterns. Through Jan. 21. . . . ¶ Two installations by the Toronto art collective General Idea: "One Day of AZT" (1991), a set of five human-size fibreglass-and-vinyl pills, on the floor; and "One Year of AZT" (1991), three hundred and sixty-five sets of pills, arranged in months, on the walls. Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ "New Photography 12" features work by Richard Billingham, Thomas Demand, Osamu Kanemura, Sophie Ristelhueber, Georgina Starr, and Wolfgang Tillmans. Through Feb. 4. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Ellsworth Kelly," a large survey of the artist's paintings, sculptures, works on paper, and photographs. Through Jan. 19. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, except Christmas, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"The Hugo Boss Prize: 1996." The Guggenheim clearly had Britain's prestigious Turner Prize in mind when it established this award, named for a German menswear designer—a source of funding which some have suggested is, well, a bit tacky. But there can be no denying the merit of the inaugural-year short list: Laurie Anderson, Janine Antoni, Matthew Barney, Cai Guo Qiang, Stan Douglas, and Yasumasa Morimura, who were judged on the basis of their work as a whole, rather than on the strength of their installations here. That's a good thing for Barney, the winner, who bothered to submit only a few stills and props from his splendid video "Cremaster 1." In the show, however, Antoni comes off best, with "Slumber," a complex piece including a bed in which the artist sleeps each night, an electroencephalograph that records her brain-wave activity, and a loom on which she weaves her EEG patterns into a blanket: a compelling rereading of the myth of Penelope. The effect is riveting. Through Jan. 19. . . . ¶ "Max Beckmann in Exile." Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays, except Christmas, through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"Making Mischief," an excellent exhibition chronicling the Dada invasion of New York, from the Great War through the early twenties. Chief among its attractions is a significant selection of pieces by Marcel Duchamp, including a painstaking reconstruction (recently made by Swedish scholars) of his masterpiece "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even," also known as the "Large Glass." Through Feb. 23. . . . ¶ "I'll Be Your Mirror," a retrospective of Nan Goldin's disturbing photographs

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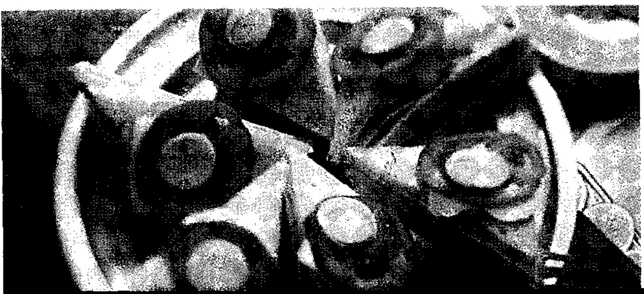

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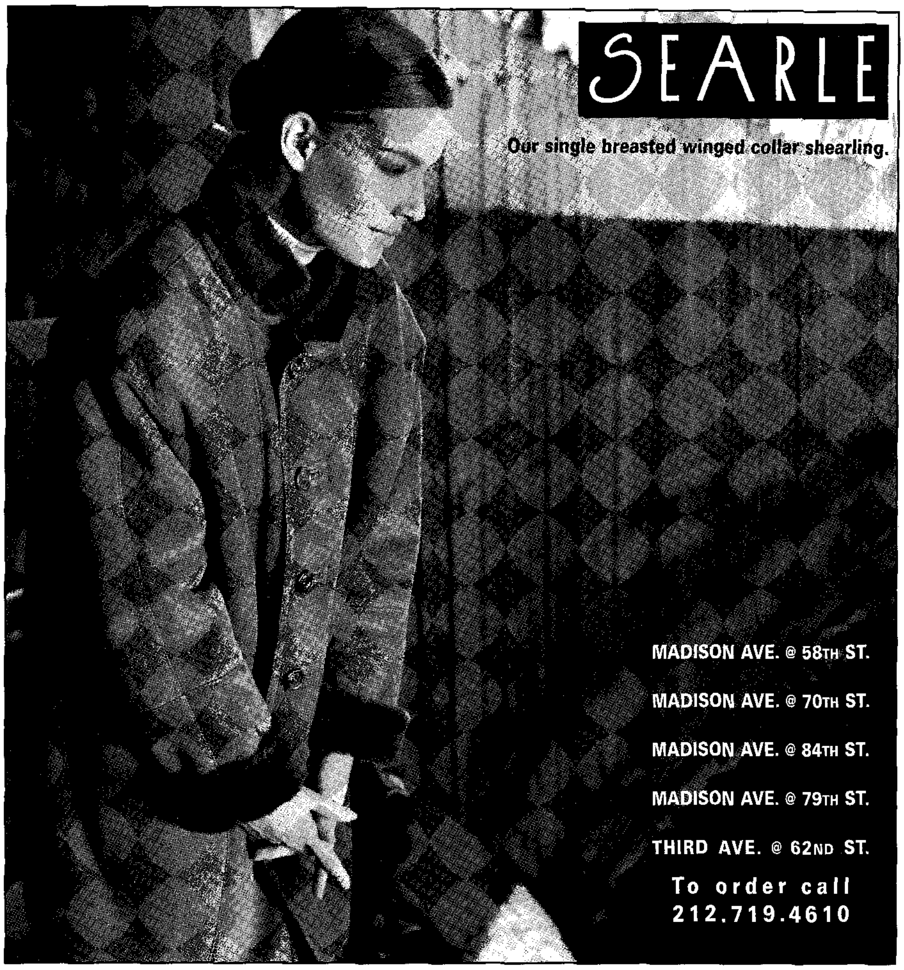
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of the gritty, glamorous downtown life. Through Jan. 5. (A concurrent show of Goldin's pictures of children is at Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St., through Dec. 21.) . . . ¶ "Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art 2." Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays, except Christmas, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—An exhibit of the Codex Leicester, Leonardo's manuscript on such scientific subjects as hydrodynamics and astronomy. Through Jan. 1. (Open daily, except Christmas, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—The museum's extensive Chinese collection has handsome new quarters in which a careful, lucid presentation offers a broad look at the art of the Middle Kingdom, from Neolithic stone carvings to blue-and-white ceramics of the late Ch'ing dynasty. . . . ¶ "In the Light of Italy: Corot and Early Open-Air Painting," an exquisite exhibition of oil sketches which makes a marvellous pendant to the big Corot show at the Met. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ A small show of black-and-white photographs by Bruce Cratsley. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays, except Christmas, through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. (288-6400)—"Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions." The best work in this superb show manages to avoid mimicking the vernacular of Western modernism and postmodernism by drawing upon traditional forms. Through Feb. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, except Christmas, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.) . . . **note:** The exhibition extends to N.Y.U.'s Grey Art Gallery (100 Washington Sq. E.; open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, 11 to 6:30; Wednesdays, 11:30 to 8:30; Saturdays, 11 to 5; through Dec. 21) and to the Queens Museum of Art (Flushing Meadows–Corona Park; open Wednesdays, except Christmas, through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5; through Feb. 16).

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—The heart of the Morgan collection is its stock of Rembrandts, the greatest of which are now on view in "A Fine Line: Rembrandt as Etcher." Every impression here is exquisite, from the splendid copy of "The Hundred Guilder Print" to a postage-stamp-size self-portrait as a goggle-eyed, openmouthed youth. In the series illustrating scenes from the life of Jesus, the gorgeously printed "Adoration of the Shepherds: A Night Piece" is especially fine, its figures just visible in a rich, velvety midnight gloom. . . . ¶ "Seventeenth-Century Dutch Drawings," a selection of seventy-five Baroque works which includes, among other odds and ends, a strange pair of copies of Mogul miniatures by Rembrandt and some brilliantly colored genre scenes by Adriaen van Ostade. Both shows through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, except Christmas, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum for African Art, 593 Broadway, between Houston and Prince Sts. (966-1313)—"Art of the Baga" features drums, masks, costumes, and other objects made by the Baga inhabitants of Guinea, in West Africa. Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, except Christmas, 10:30 to 5:30; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 6.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (369-4880)—"Powerful Expressions: Recent American Drawings" includes five works each by fifteen artists, among them Jim Dine, Sidney Goodman, R. B. Kitaj, Susan Rothenberg, Jasper Johns, and Elizabeth Murray. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays, except Christmas, through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

National Museum of the American Indian, 1 Bowling Green (668-6624)—"Woven by the Grandmothers," a display of nineteenth-century Navajo textiles from the museum's collection. Through Jan. 8. . . . ¶ Thirty-eight contemporary Navajo rugs and tapestries are on view,

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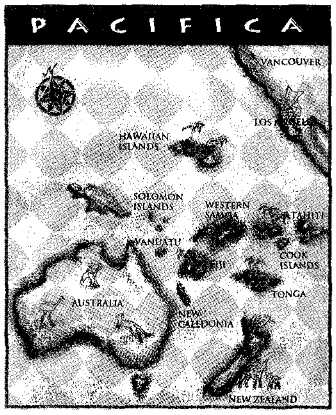
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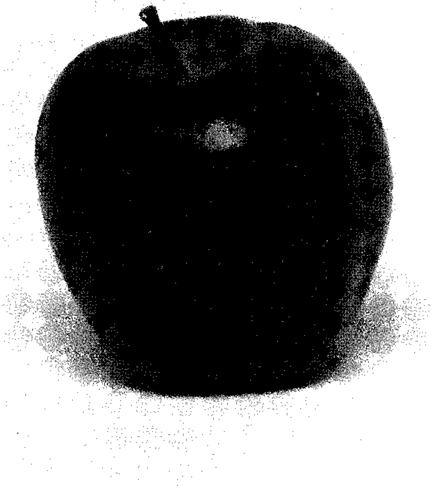

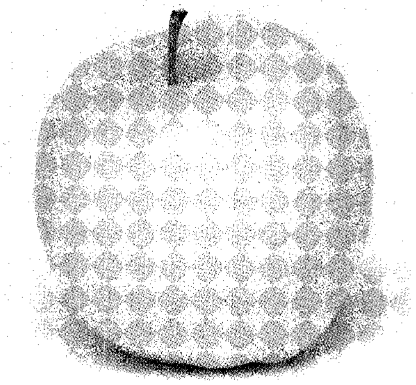

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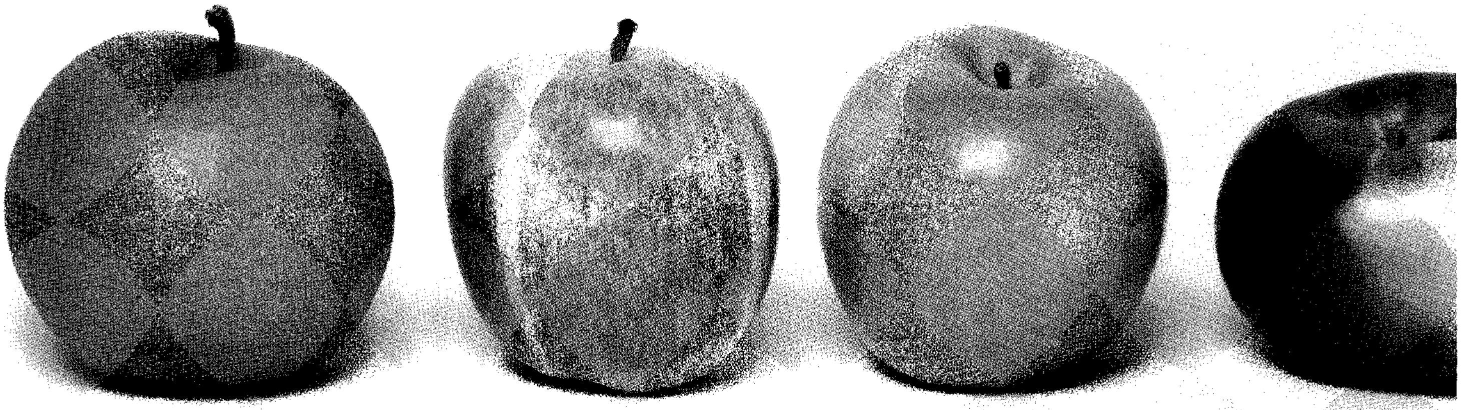

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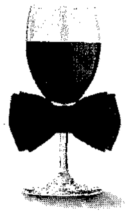

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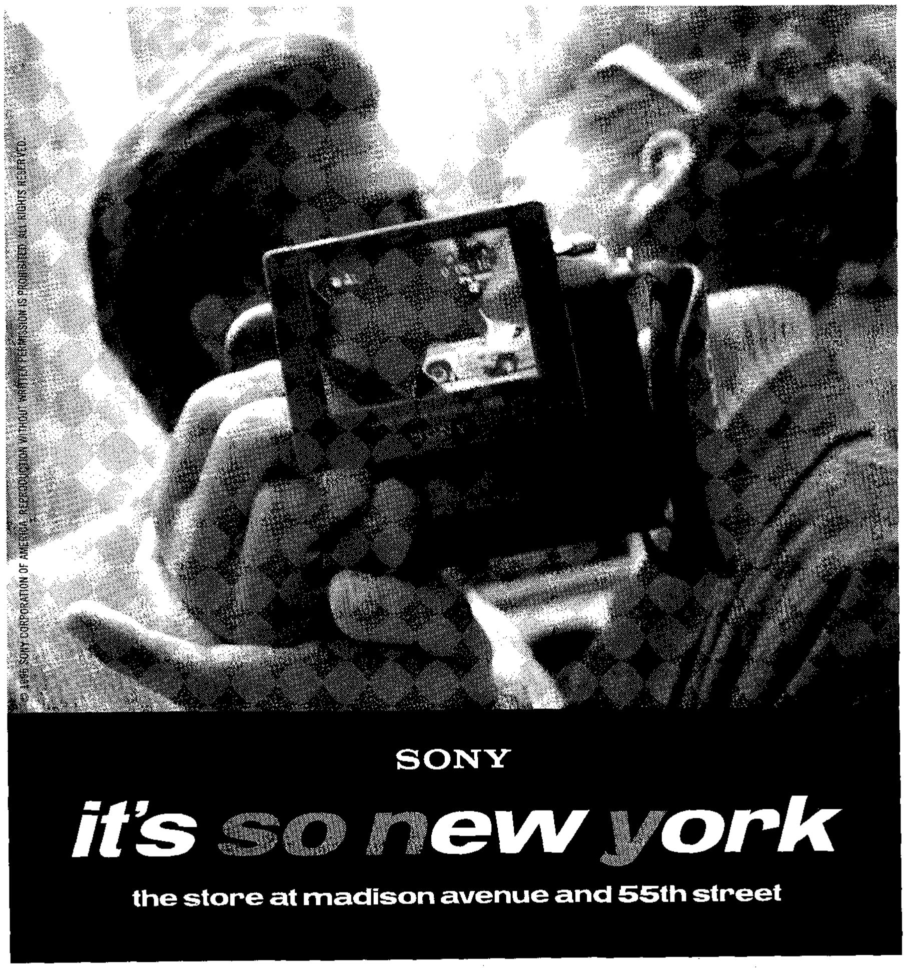

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from the collection of the Denver Art Museum. Through Jan. 8. (Open daily, except Christmas, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway, between Houston and Prince Sts. (219-1222)—"Up To and Including Her Limits." Carolee Schneemann, an important precursor of the body-art movement, is the focus of this small but well-mounted retrospective, which ranges from early, funky assemblages incorporating broken mirrors and dead birds to photomontages and videos that document such major performance pieces as the infamous "Meat Joy." Performed in 1964, "Meat Joy" had a cast of nine men and women who stripped down and writhed ecstatically as they pelted one another with mackerels, plucked chickens, and hot dogs, and rubbed them against their naked bodies as they painted themselves. Through Jan. 26. (Open Wednesdays, except Christmas, through Sundays, noon to 6; Saturday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 6.)

New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St. (838-0230)—"Strange Matter" revisits the inks and watercolors of Roz Chast. Through Jan. 10. (Open weekdays, except Christmas, 10 to 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—"Scaasi: The Joy of Dressing Up," a large retrospective studded with examples of the designer's entrance-making couture. Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ A small display of paintings, letters, and sketches by the engineer and inventor Robert Fulton explores the parallels between his career and that of Leonardo. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays, except Christmas, through Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays. They will all be closed Christmas. As several will be closed at other times during the holidays, it is advisable to call ahead.)

Jörg Immendorff—Grotesque drawings and a painting (all strongly reminiscent of the savage satires of another German, Georg Grosz) based on the artist's designs for a production of Stravinsky's opera "The Rake's Progress" at Salzburg in 1994. In a series of gouaches, Immendorff identifies himself with the opera's protagonist, Tom Rakewell; "In the House of Mother Goose," for example, shows him, in hideous whiteface, contemplating himself in a hand mirror that reflects the sly face of an ape. One wall is given over to a twenty-three-foot canvas of the stage as a battlefield, with the players revealed, often lewdly, from behind. Through Jan. 18. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Open Mondays.)

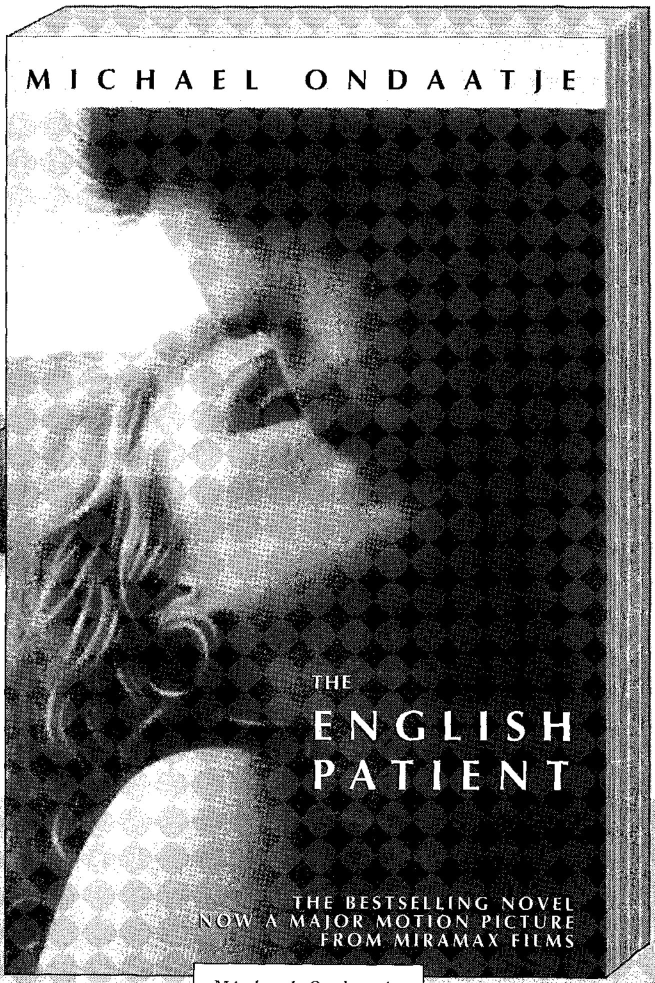
Short List—RICHARD BAKER, Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780. Through Jan 11. . . . **DAVID BIERK,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. 399-5510. Through Jan. 11 . . . . **ELIZABETH BISHOP** and **ROBERT BORDO,** De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave. at 57th St. 262-5050. Both shows through Jan. 4. . . . **JEAN-BAPTISTE-CAMILLE COROT** and **ROBERT DE NIRO,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays; through Jan. 13 and Dec. 28, respectively. . . . **JIM DINE,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through Jan. 11. . . . **SUZAN FRECON,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St., 535-8810; and Markey, 55 Vandam St., 627-4446. Both shows through Jan. 11. . . . **ANDY GOLDSWORTHY,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through Jan. 9. . . . **VLADIMIR KANEVSKY,** Zalman, 24 W. 57th St. 246-1155. Through Dec. 28. . . . **REGINALD MARSH,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through Jan. 4. . . . **HORACE PIPPIN,** Dintenfass, 20 E. 79th St. 581-2268. Through Jan. 9. . . . **PAULA REGO,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; through Jan. 4. . . . **PHILIP SHERROD,** Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 988-6870. Through Jan. 31. . . . **GRETCHEN DOW SIMPSON,** Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669. Through Jan. 4. . . . **LEON POLK SMITH,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. 319-1996. Through Jan. 31. . . . **ZAO WOU-KI,** Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. 755-7288. Through Jan. 20.

Michael Ondaatje

#1 NATIONAL BESTSELLER

Winner of the Booker Prize

Photo © Dominic Sansoni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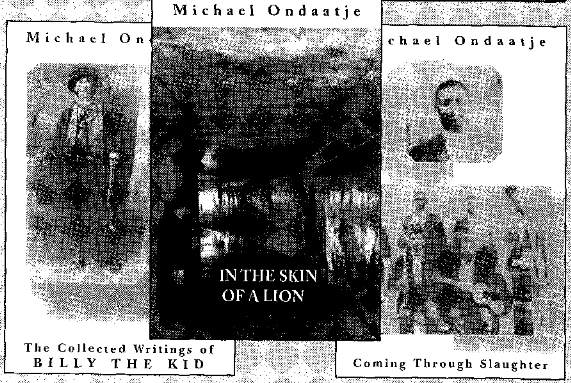
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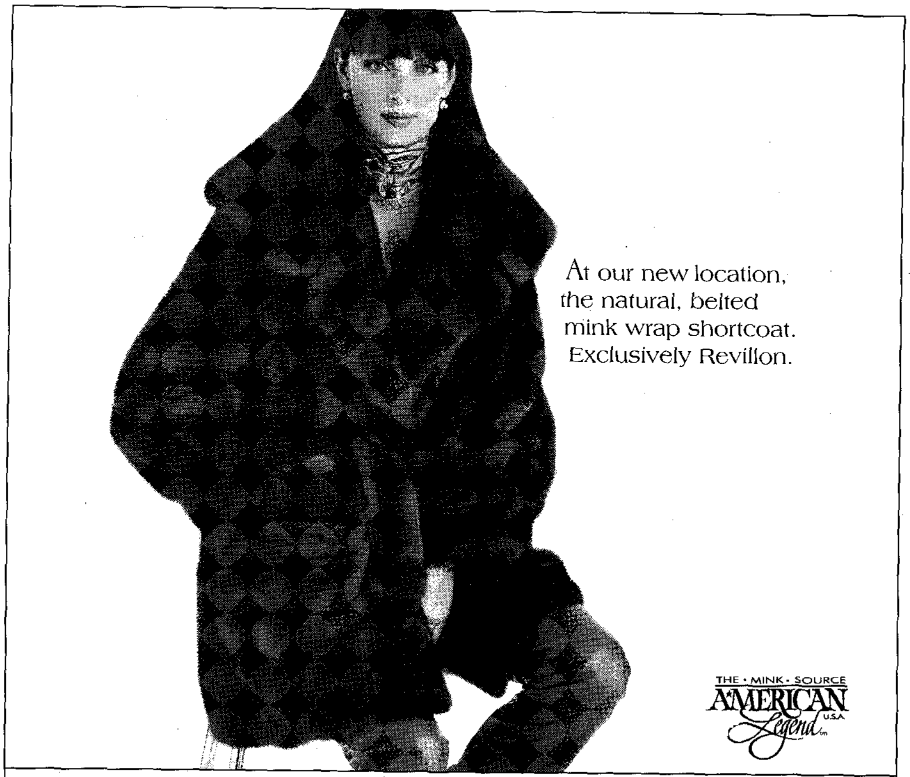

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GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Ellen Cantor—Wall drawings, collages, and a video. Cantor's work dwells on sexuality—particularly sexual violence—within a quasi-mythic dream world (Bambi plays a conspicuous role). The video is especially successful in its juxtaposition of images from "The Sound of Music" and "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre": Julie Andrews pirouettes amid Alpine scenery, then the chainsaw-wielding maniac enacts the same movement. The voice-over, in contrast, is by a woman who drily recounts the events of an abusive relationship. Through Jan. 12. (XL, 504 W. 22nd St. 462-4111.)

William Wood—Abstract grisailles whose repetitive, vaguely organic forms suggest images in an electron microscope. They're quite beautiful, and, like the paintings of David Reed and Gerhard Richter, they remain somewhat mysterious in the way they achieve their formal effects. Through Jan. 25. (Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Opens Sundays at noon.)

"Flying Saucer Project"—Ceramics, furniture, painting, and sculpture by Mary Heilmann, Steve Keister, and Steven Baines. Heilmann, who is now best known for her woozily sensuous abstract paintings, began her career as a ceramist; a year ago she began working with Keister and Baines, and this is the fruit of their labors. Although the mix of fine-art and practical objects is initially perplexing, the show repays sustained attention. Through Jan. 12. (Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366.)

Short List—**KK KOZIK**, Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through Jan. 12. . . . **HELMUT MIDDENDORF**, Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through Jan. 10. . . . **JEFF NELSON**, Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Opens at noon; through Feb. 2. . . . **ROBERT OVERBY**, Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through Jan. 12. . . . **ULF ROLLOF**, Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753. Through Jan. 12. . . . **SUE WILLIAMS**, 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-0024. Through Jan. 12.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Mark Bennett—Wonderfully escapist fare from an avowed sixties- and seventies-TV fanatic, in the form of meticulously rendered floor plans of homes you may recognize: the New Rochelle ranch house of Rob and Laura Petrie (split-level, twin beds); the DeFazio-Feeney walk-down flat, in Milwaukee; and the dark abode of Herman and Lily Munster, at 1313 Mockingbird Lane. Through Dec. 21. (Keenan, 494 Broadway. 431-5083.)

Nicole Eisenman—A freewheeling, virtuosic display of works in every medium, from outrageous cartoons (cowgirls defecating over the corral fence, Jesus sodomizing himself) to large-scale, obsessively inventive installations. Much of the artist's work is clumsy, and her humor is frequently on the whoopee-cushion level, but all the same a powerful, goofy allure pervades the show. Through Jan. 11. (Tilton, 49 Greene St. 941-1775.)

Yasumasa Morimura—The subject matter for this exhibit by the highly accomplished Japanese conceptual artist is the whole history of the movies—or at least the female half of it. In a series of lavishly printed, oversized photographic prints, he re-creates some of the screen's most famous moments, casting himself in the starring roles: as Scarlett O'Hara, as Holly Golightly, as Cleopatra. Through Jan. 4. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. 219-9600.)

Leslie Wayne—Tiny oil paintings with dense, sculptural textures, which seem to have an intense inner life. The artist takes sheets of dried oil-paint scum, slices and dices them, and then jumbles the result on panels as small as four by six inches. Some shimmer with masses of delicate filigree; others look like the work of a pasta machine gone mad. Through Dec. 21. (Shainman, 560 Broadway. 966-3866.)

Short List—**DEBORAH BUTTERFIELD**, Thorp, 103 Prince St. 431-6880. Through Jan. 18. . . . **RICHARD CLEAVER**, Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224. Through Jan. 4. . . . **ROBERT COLESCOTT**, Kind, 136 Greene St. 925-1200. Through Jan. 4. . . . **STAN DOUGLAS**, Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through Jan. 25. . . . **SHAWN DULANEY**, Bridges and Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820.

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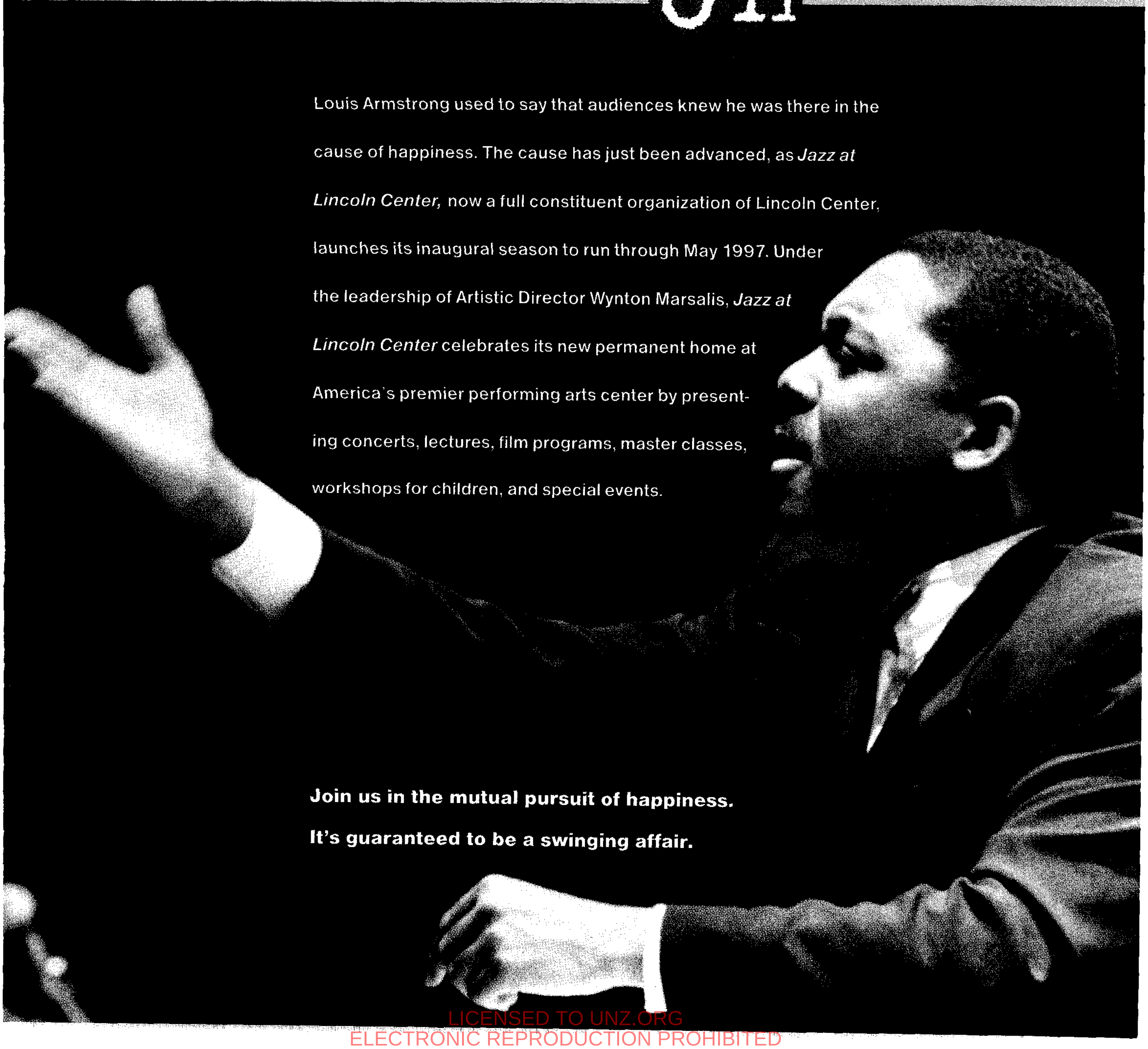

Louis Armstrong used to say that audiences knew he was there in the cause of happiness. The cause has just been advanced, as *Jazz at Lincoln Center,* now a full constituent organization of Lincoln Center, launches its inaugural season to run through May 1997. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis, *Jazz at Lincoln Center* celebrates its new permanent home at America's premier performing arts center by presenting concerts, lectures, film programs, master classes, workshops for children, and special events.

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Big Band Jazz, Big Jazz Sound

The **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra**, under the direction of conductor Wynton Marsalis, delves into the jazz canon and comes out swinging with a series of big band concerts throughout this inaugural season.

At 8 P.M. on February 24, 1997, the LCJO presents **Blood on the Fields**, Marsalis' epic oratorio on freedom and slavery, love and longing. Featuring Cassandra Wilson, Jon Hendricks, and Miles Griffith, this important work was hailed by critics as moving and magnificent upon its debut in 1994. At a pre-performance jazz talk* Marsalis and special guests will explore the heritage of spirituals and work songs, and chart their influence on jazz music.

Join the LCJO tenor saxophonist Frank Foster and special guests on April 17th for **Swingin' The Blues for Count Basie**. A pre-performance jazz talk* will feature Foster and author Albert Murray as they recount the Count.

The immortal Duke Ellington composed tonal postcards of the places he visited on his never-ending world tour. On May 10th, the LCJO will perform **Duke Goes Abroad: The International Ellington**—including "The Latin American Suite" and "Afro-Eurasian Eclipse." Pre-performance,* Marsalis and special guests will speak on The Duke.

Cassandra Wilson to perform in *Blood on the Fields*.

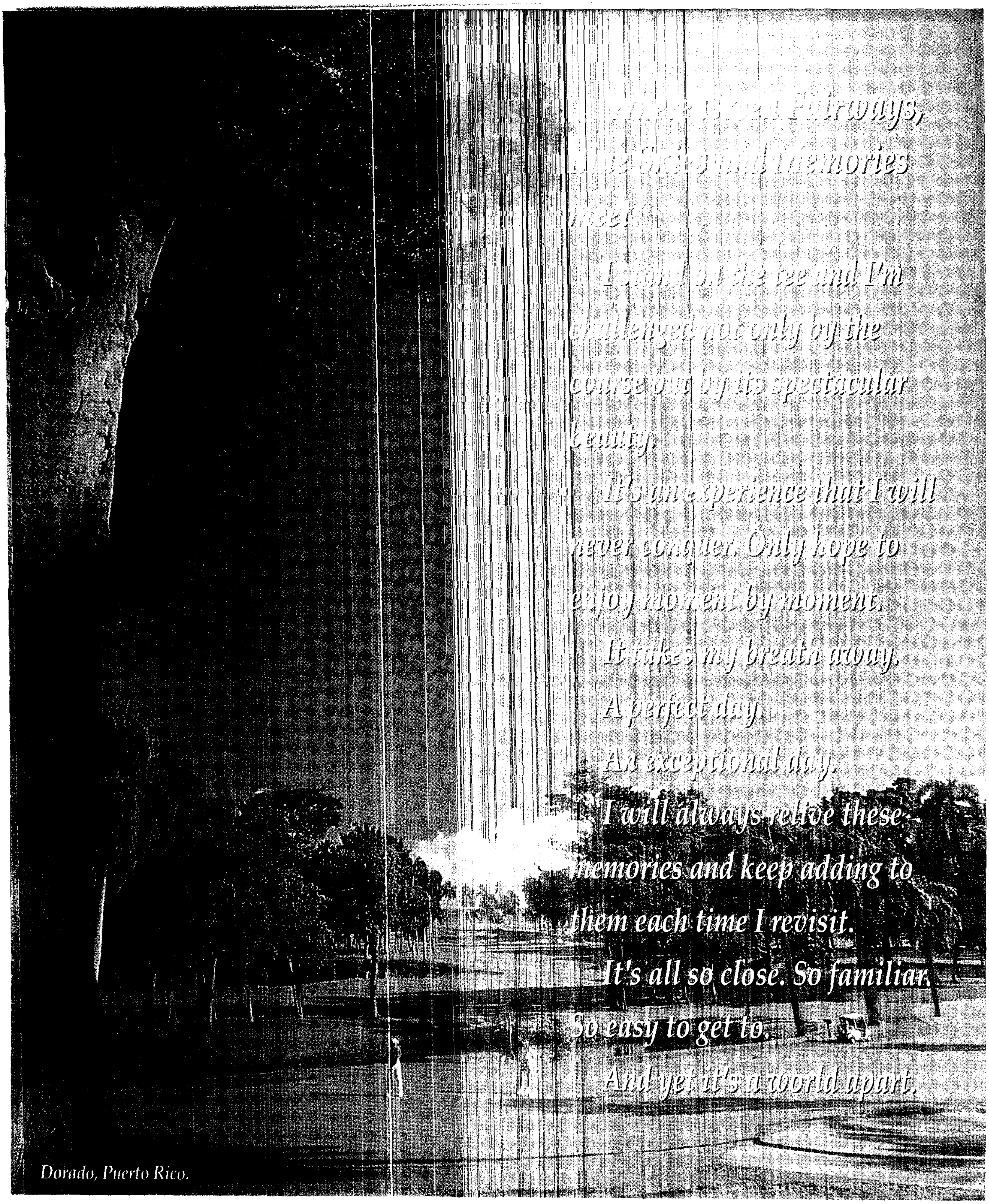
** Jazz talks begin at 7:15 P.M.*

Eric Reed to do 'battle' with other two-fisted masters.

Scale the Heights of Jazz Piano

Experience the giants of solo jazz piano in **Jazz at the Penthouse**—a unique series of Friday night concerts. Seating is up close, club-style, at Lincoln Center's Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse (165 West 65th Street), with spectacular nighttime views of the Hudson River and Manhattan. Hear the most influential jazz pianist and composer of the last thirty-five years, **McCoy Tyner** on January 10th. The music of Ellington and Thelonious Monk combine with African and gospel influences when **Randy Weston** takes the stage January 31st. **Jay McShann** brings his double-fisted, rompin', stompin' swing and blues to town on April 11th. All concerts start at 8 P.M.

Six of today's most explosive piano-led trios test their bonds of response and rhythm in **Battle Royale: Piano Trios.** Pianists Eric Reed, Jacky Terrasson, Benny Green, Stephen Scott, Renee Rosnes, and Danilo Pérez play three-way tag with their empathetic rhythm sections—driving hard, swinging high, cutting edge. Concerts begin at 7:30 P.M. on March 7th and 8th at Alice Tully Hall.



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Jazz For Young People

Wynton's riff: Making jazz more accessible to kids.

No one knows how to hook kids on jazz like Wynton Marsalis—his award-winning public television series, *Marsalis on Music*, has already been made into a critically acclaimed book. Now, Marsalis and the LCJO present a series of children-friendly concerts that are as enjoyable and fun as they are educational.

On January 11th at 12 P.M. and 2 P.M. Marsalis presents a toe-tapping lesson in grooving to a syncopated beat in **What is Swing?** Every child should know about one of the prolific heroes of twentieth-century music, and they will after attending **Who is Duke Ellington?** on May 3rd at 12 P.M. and 2 P.M.

What is Latin Jazz ?

Jazz at Lincoln Center's first-of-the-season *Jazz for Young People* concert, *What is Latin Jazz?*, examined how Afro-Caribbean music blended with nineteenth-century formal Spanish dances to give birth to Latin Jazz. It featured pianist Danilo Pérez, saxophonist and flutist Mario Rivera, trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis. Look for other great Latin jazz events in '97.

Pianist Pérez

At the Source...

For those with a passion for Latin jazz, this music is massively popular throughout the Caribbean. The Puerto Rico Heineken JazzFest (May 29-June 1) is one of the premier jazz festivals in the Caribbean. Here, internationally acclaimed headliners share the stage with local Latin jazz bands. Similarly, annual events like the Jazz & Latin Music Festival in Aruba (late June) also place special emphasis on the Latin beat, and countless carnivals celebrate the music throughout the region.

Jazz at Lincoln Center's inaugural constituent season also features today's foremost jazz musicians introducing the greats of the past in **Jazz on Film**. Noted musicians, writers, and scholars offer their insights and personal recollections in **Jazz Talk**.

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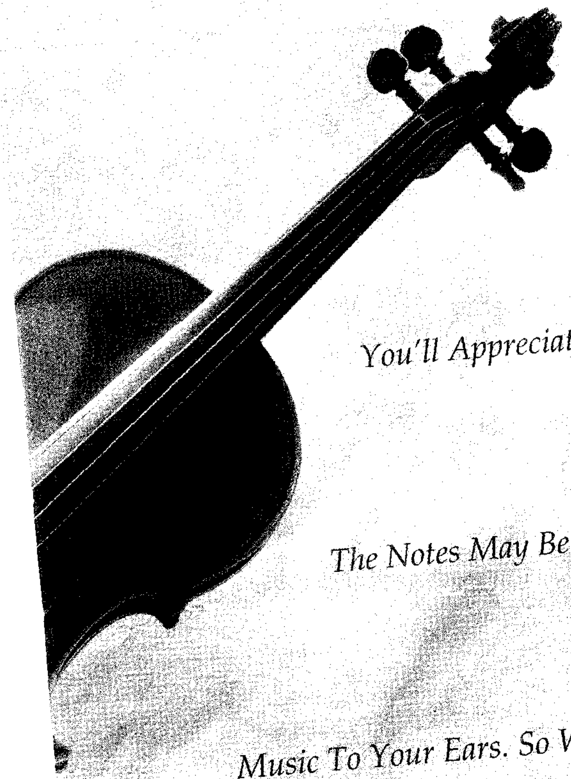

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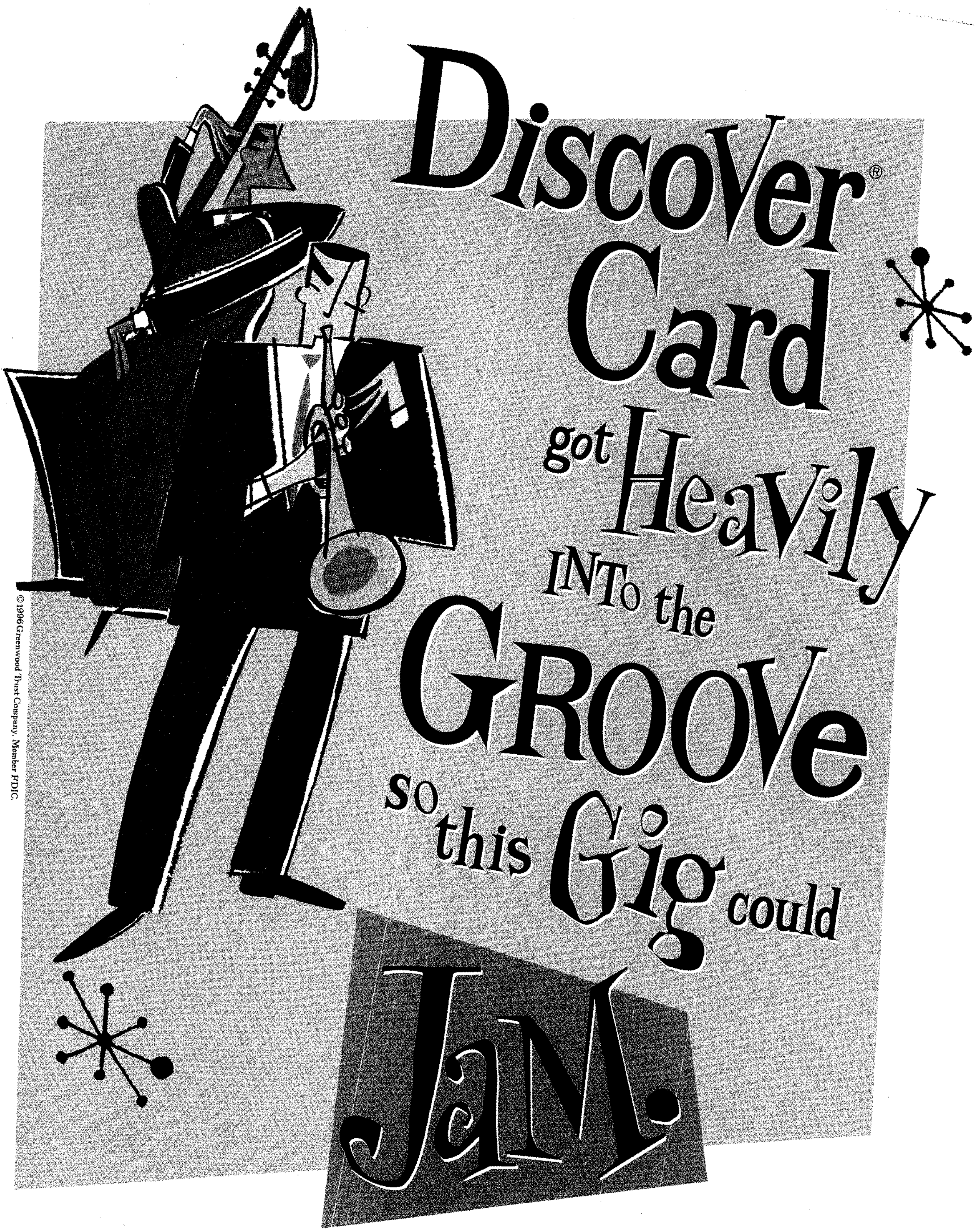
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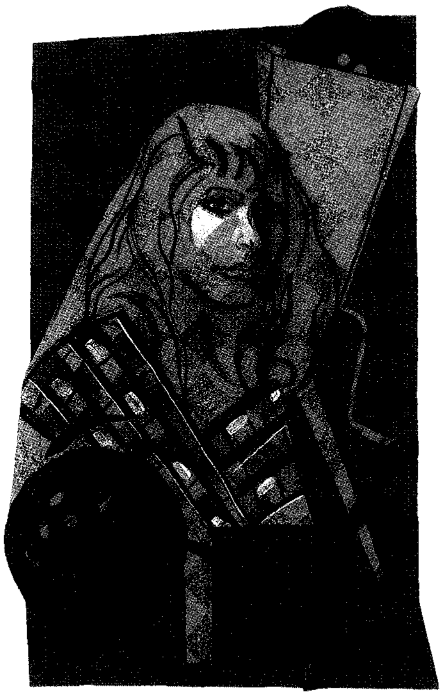


CHARLIE MILGRIM:

New sculptures at O.K. Harris.

Set 'Em Up—Charlie Milgrim owns three hundred bowling balls. "I'll go as high as fifty cents," she says. "But I've never been to a garage sale where, no matter what price they originally put on the bowling ball, they wouldn't take a quarter for it when I offered." Actually, she'll go as high as the roof of the Art and Anthropology building at the University of California, Berkeley, from which—between semesters—she has dropped a few; in winter they crack, in spring they bounce. But experiments in hang time and vertical leap have proved less useful to the sculptor than her discovery of the bowling ball's ability to balance on its thumbhole: her show at O.K. Harris is filled with bowling balls arrested in poses of surprising litheness. In "Secret Concert," twin purple ones on music stands lean together and chastely kiss; in "Mood Rack," seven, in moody blue-green shades, rest on an eight-foot ladder, one to a step, like putti. Elsewhere, the balls balance on scavenged implements: a leaf grinder, a pitchfork, a steel half-barrel of inscrutable farmyard use. The effect is delicate and giddy—and always dangerous, like a good joke. Through Jan. 4. (383 West Broadway. 431-3600.)

Through Jan. 19. . . . **Leslie Lerner**, Rosenberg and Kaufman, 115 Wooster St. 431-4838. Through Jan. 4. . . . **Pierre Le Tan**, Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219. Through Jan. 18. . . . **Edward Lipski**, In Khan, 415 West Broadway. 226-6484. Through Jan. 31. . . . **Joseph Marioni**, Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through Jan. 11. . . . **Justin Novak**, Synchronicity Space, 55 Mercer St. 925-8645. Through Jan. 4 . . . . **Charles Searles**, June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 226-1660. Through Jan. 7. . . . **Jonathan Seliger**, Bravin Post Lee, 80 Mercer St. 966-2676. Through Dec. 21.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—Visitors have been stopping to wonder at the quizzical smile of Amenhotep III, whose imposing granodiorite bust has been surveying the auction house's upstairs hallway since early November. The one-ton sculpture is expected to find a new owner on Dec. 18, in the course of a sale of Etruscan, Iberian, and Near Eastern antiquities. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Swann's—A rare-book auction that includes fifteen lots of volumes illustrated by Cruikshank. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Dec. 19.)

DAVID TOMB

PHOTOGRAPHY

Ansel Adams (1902-84) / **"A Season of Victory"**—Vintage prints (smaller, generally, than the artist's later ones), including views of Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, and Alaska. / The Yankees on the road to this year's Big Show, by Barton Silverman, David Burnett, Linda Cataffo, and photographers from the Associated Press and *Sports Illustrated.* Both shows through Jan. 11. (Danziger, 130 Prince St. 226-0056.)

Darrel Ellis (1958-92)—Perhaps best known as a favorite model of Robert Mapplethorpe's, Ellis deserves, on the evidence of this show, wider recognition as an artist in his own right. The pictures are all derived from photographs, but his careful reworking of them—in paint and other mediums—endows them with a melancholy expressionism. One immediately recognizable image is his pen-and-ink self-portrait, after a well-known Mapplethorpe photograph: a beautiful reappropriation of his own image. Through Jan. 25. (Art in General, 79 Walker St. 219-0473. Opens at noon.)

Lynn Geesaman / **Eugène Atget** (1857-1927)—An unreconstructed seeker of beauty in the landscape who is finding more ready acceptance in our post-everything climate, Geesaman here captures the Parc de Sceaux, one of Atget's most sublime haunts, in her own consummate style. In one of several views, a sharp alabaster sky separates two sentry rows of trees, their branches glowing like bones in an X-ray, their leaves like feathers. Other sites in France and Belgium provide her with similar successes, but none approaches the ripe kitsch of the iron-filigree cupola of the Love Temple, at Longwood Gardens, in Pennsylvania. / Seven vintage albumen prints of gardens (Versailles, Saint-Cloud, Sceaux) and street scenes. Don't miss them. Both shows through Jan. 11. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

Martin Parr—"Mouthwatering" doesn't quite convey the feeling in the gut you get from viewing these high-key color closeups of English cuisine: shiny cold sausages, plates of spreading beans and eggs, rows of doughy doughnuts. Through Dec. 31. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.)

Fawn Potash—"The Library Series." An obsession with books is one of the saner fetishes. As a way of escaping the daily grind, Potash started working late at night, piling up worn nineteenth-century volumes from her shelves in various arrangements and shooting them by lamplight and moonlight. Some of the pictures are more engaging than others—a "flying" pile, a modest profile of a mammoth Webster's, and three schoolbooks with their pages interleaved as if they'd been shuffled. Portraits of books can be, well, bookish, but these gentle wax-rubbed prints shine with a sensuousness that goes beyond prim propriety. (Several of the books, with titles like "Insect Folk," "Bird World," and "Ways of the Six Footed," are on view.) Through Jan. 18. (Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

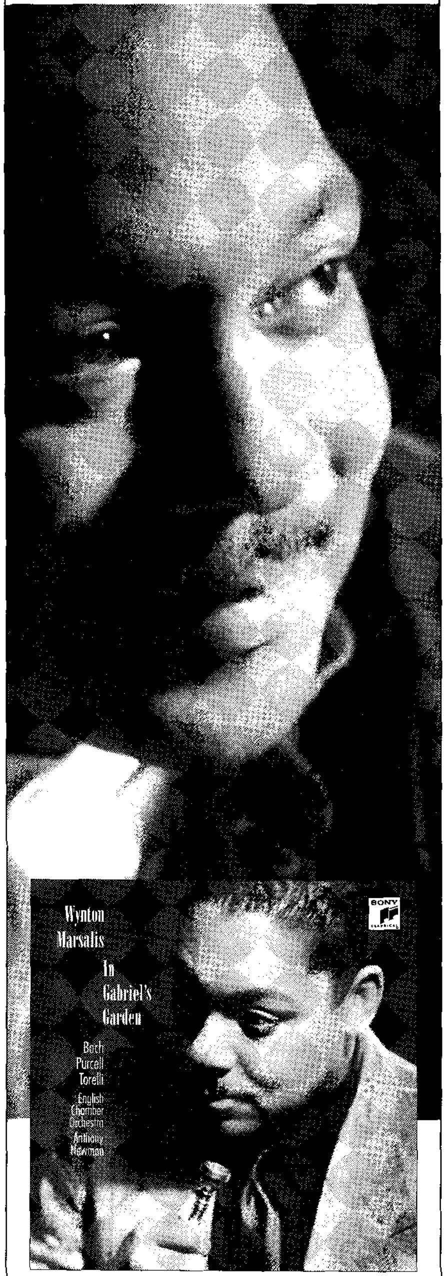
"All You See!"—Sarah Morthland, the founder and former director of Gallery 292, has opened a new space in Chelsea, in an 1860 town house that at one time sheltered a speakeasy. The eclectic lot here (the title is from an optometrist's trade sign) includes antique and recent abstract photographs, photograms, X-rays, and other oddments. Through Jan. 12. (225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Opens at noon.)

"Women of the Clarence White School"—In the beginning (ca. 1914), female students outnumbered males two to one. On view here are works by Doris Ulmann, Anne W. Brigman, Margaret Watkins, Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange, and others. Through Jan. 18. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—"Pictorialism Into Modernism: The Clarence H. White School of Photography." Through Jan. 12. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**Ellen Carey**, Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. 780-0071. Through Dec. 21. . . . **Petah Coyne** and **Julia Margaret Cameron**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. Both shows through Dec. 28. . . . **Lynn Davis**, Houk Fried-

Wynton Marsalis



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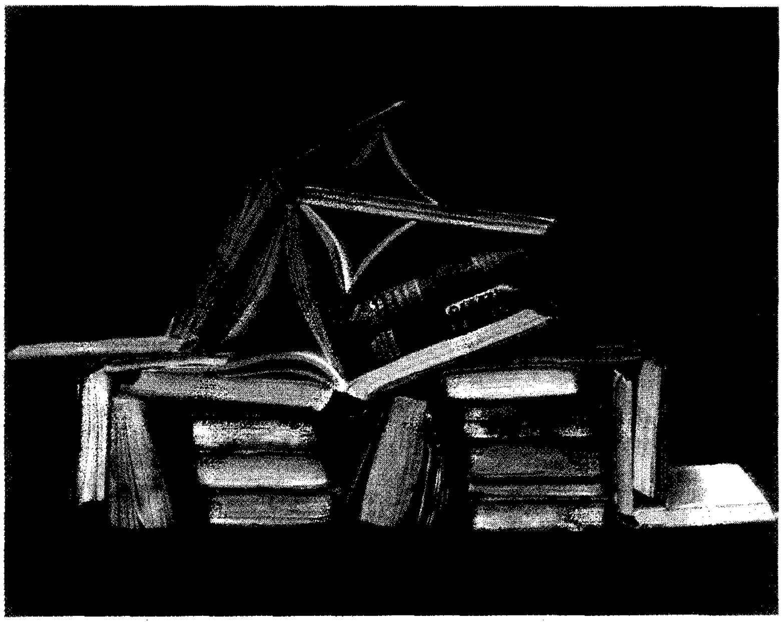


"Small Pile of Books," by Fawn Potash (Gallery 292).

man, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 628-5300. Through Jan. 4. . . . **MITCH EPSTEIN** and **VERA LUTTER,** Wooster Gardens, 558 Broadway. 941-6210. Both shows through Dec. 28. . . . **JILL FREEDMAN,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through Jan. 11. . . . **JEAN KALLINA,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Jan. 19. . . . **JILL KREMENTZ,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through Jan. 4. . . . **LISETTE MODEL** and **DIANE ARBUS,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Both shows through Jan. 11. . . . **JEANNE MOUTOUSSAMY-ASHE,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through Jan. 22. . . . **JOHN SCHABEL,** Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753. Through Jan. 12. . . . **MARGARET WATKINS,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through Jan. 4.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Brooklyn Museum.)

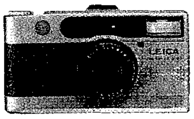
CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Avery Fisher Hall is 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; and for the Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., 570-3949.)

HOLIDAY CONCERTS

HANDEL'S "MESSIAH"—The season concludes, with a vengeance. Dec. 18 at 7:30: A sound-and-light interpretation, with the combined choirs of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133.) . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 8: The National Chorale's annual sing-along, with seventeen conductors taking turns on the podium. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Dec. 18 at 8: Richard Westenburg directs the Musica Sacra Chorus and Orchestra, with soprano Marvis Martin, mezzo-soprano Shelley Waite, tenor David Gordon, and baritone David Arnold. (Carnegie Hall.) . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 7:30: The St. Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, Concert Royal (a Baroque orchestra), and soloists Julianne Baird (soprano), Dana Marsh (countertenor), Gregory Carder (tenor), and Curtis Streetman (bass), directed by Gerre Hancock. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 757-7013, ext. 3027.) . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 8: Robert Bass presides over the Collegiate Chorale and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Carnegie Hall.) . . . ¶ Dec. 20 at 8: Martin Josman leads the National Chorale. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ Dec. 21 at 8 and Dec. 22 at 2: The Masterwork Chorus and Orchestra, directed by David Briskin. (Carnegie Hall.)

CAROLLING—Dec. 20 at 7: The members of the West Village Chorale, and all who care to join them, take their annual musical stroll through Greenwich Village. (The group leaves from the school cafeteria behind St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St., and returns there for post-carolling conviviality. For information, call 570-7301.) . . .



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¶ Dec. 24 at 5: A songfest just east of the arch in Washington Square, with the New York University Brass Ensemble.

Quartetto Gelato—The amusingly named ensemble (and amusingly constituted, too: voice, oboe, cello, and accordion) offers traditional Christmas carols, as well as arrangements from works by Stradella, Corelli, Ponchielli, and others. (Medieval Sculpture Court, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 18 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

Riverside Chamber Choir and Aulos Ensemble—The singers and the period-instrument group offer Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols," Bach's motet "Singet dem Herrn," and a suite from Rameau's "Les Indes Galantes." (Medieval Sculpture Court, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 19 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

St. Bartholomew's Choir and American Boychoir—The two ensembles join in a program that includes a carol sing-along. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. Dec. 19 at 8.)

St. Cecilia Chorus and Orchestra—David Randolph leads all six cantatas of Bach's "Christmas Oratorio," with soloists Mary Ellen Callahan (soprano), Trudy Weaver (mezzo-soprano), Robert Guarino (tenor), and Mark Moliterno (baritone). (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 20 at 8.)

Ensemble for Early Music—The group offers a wide-ranging program of medieval and Renaissance Christmas music, including fourteenth-century Italian *laude* and fifteenth-century English carols. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Dec. 20 at 8, Dec. 21 at 3 and 8, and Dec. 22 at 3. For information about tickets, call 749-6600.)

Beethoven's Ninth—The Japanese tradition of performing the "Choral" Symphony at the year's end is gaining a foothold in New York. In this performance, Yoshimi Takeda directs an orchestra of students from the Juilliard School and Japan's Konan University, an enormous chorus of Japanese and American singers (occupying two of the auditorium's tiers), and four Japanese soloists. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 21 at 2.)

Boys Choir of Harlem—Schubert's G-Major Mass anchors a program that includes a new piece by David Hurd, a group of Christmas spirituals, and jazz and gospel arrangements of seasonal favorites. Members of the New York Philharmonic assist, and Walter J. Turnbull directs. (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 21 at 3.)

Canticum Novum Singers—Performing Christmas music from six centuries, with Harold Rosenbaum directing. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Dec. 21 at 8. Tickets at the door. . . . ¶ St. Ignatius Episcopal Church, West End Ave. at 87th St. Dec. 22 at 3. Tickets at the door.)

St. Ignatius Loyola Choirs—Kent Tritle directs Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols" and other seasonal favorites. (Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520. Dec. 22 at 4.)

Anonymous 4—The women's vocal quartet sings medieval Hungarian chant and polyphony of the Christmas season, interspersed with readings from "The Peasant Bible," an early-twentieth-century collection of Bible stories recast in the vernacular style of the Hungarian oral tradition. (Medieval Sculpture Court, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 22 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

New York City Gay Men's Chorus—Gary Miller directs seasonal works by (among others) John Rutter and Vaughan Williams; Broadway star Faith Prince helps out. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 22-23 at 8.)

New York Big Brass—The eleven-member ensemble performs festive works by Monteverdi, Giovanni Gabrieli, Prokofiev, and others. (Medieval Sculpture Court, Metropolitan Museum. Dec. 23 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

The Canadian Brass and Members of the New York Philharmonic Brass—That adds up to ten powerful players. Their program includes music by Orlando Gibbons and Giovanni Gabrieli, Christopher Dedrick's "Bernstein Portrait (An Heroic Tone Poem)," and plenty of Christmas and Hanukkah cheer. (Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 28-29 at 3.)

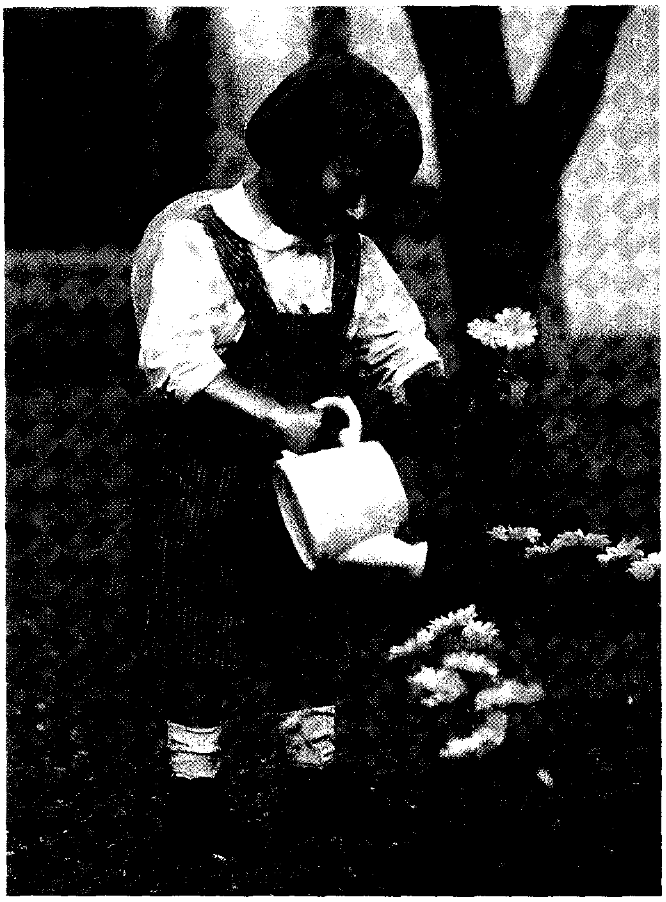
OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM,** by Britten, with Sylvia McNair, Nancy Gustafson, Jane Bunnell, Jochen Kowalski, Kurt Streit, Rodney Gilfry, and Peter Rose; conducted by David Atherton. (Dec. 18 at 7:30 and Dec. 21 at 1:30.) . . . **L'ELISIR D'AMORE,** with Andrea Rost, Richard Leech, Gino Quilico, and Leo Nucci; Carlo Rizzi. (Dec. 19 at 8.) . . . **TOSCA,** with Carol Vaness, Vincenzo La Scola, and Jean-Philippe Lafont; Christian Badea. (Dec. 20 at 8.) . . . With James Morris instead of Mr. Lafont. (Dec. 24 at 8—a perverse way to spend Christmas Eve—and Dec. 27 at 8.) . . . **RIGOLETTO,** with Mary

LISTENING BOOTH

"Gravikords, Whirlies & Pyrophones"—Any music lover would benefit from a few ear-opening hours with this elegantly produced anthology (Ellipsis Arts CD-3530, with an accompanying ninety-six-page book by Bart Hopkin) of works performed on experimental musical instruments. No clarinets and cellos here: instead, the reader-listener meets thirty-seven oddball inventors who have expanded the instrumentarium with such curious creations as the fire organ, the vibraband, and the flowerpotophone. Among the sound-makers are several relative classics (including Leon Theremin's eponymous electronic box and Harry Partch's microtonal collection), but most are of more recent vintage. Many are captivatingly beautiful: Jean-Claude Chapuis's delicate glass instruments, Ward Hartenstein's smile-inducing clay marimba, Jacques Dudon's haunting aquavina. Others are—how shall we say?—bracing, like Wendy Mae Chambers's car-horn organ, which, in the stunning finale, honks out the rudest rendition on record of "New York, New York." Since the CD spotlights only half the builders featured in the book, Ellipsis Arts really ought to follow up with a second disk; if Arthur K. Ferris's whispering harp or Carleen Hutchins's elegant expansions of the violin family sound as intriguing as they look, it would be a must-have, too.

J. SEWARD JOHNSON, JR.



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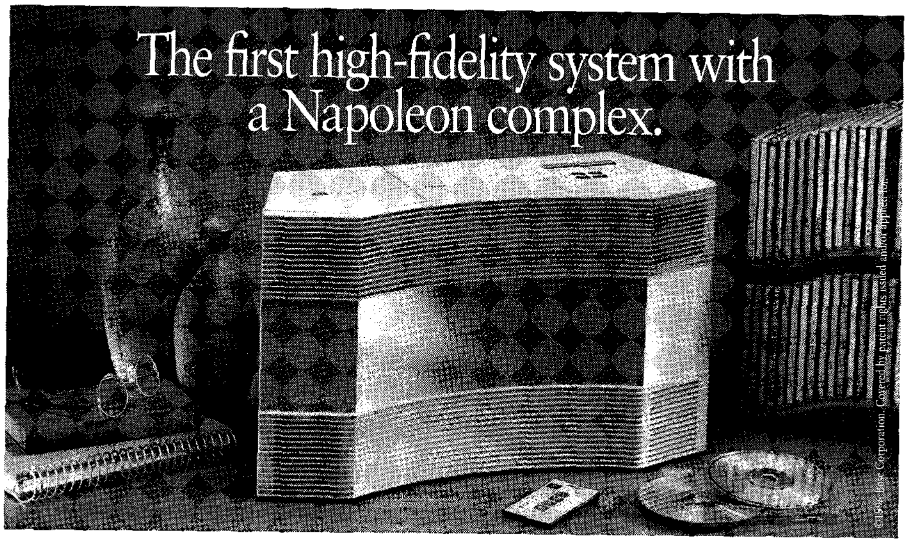
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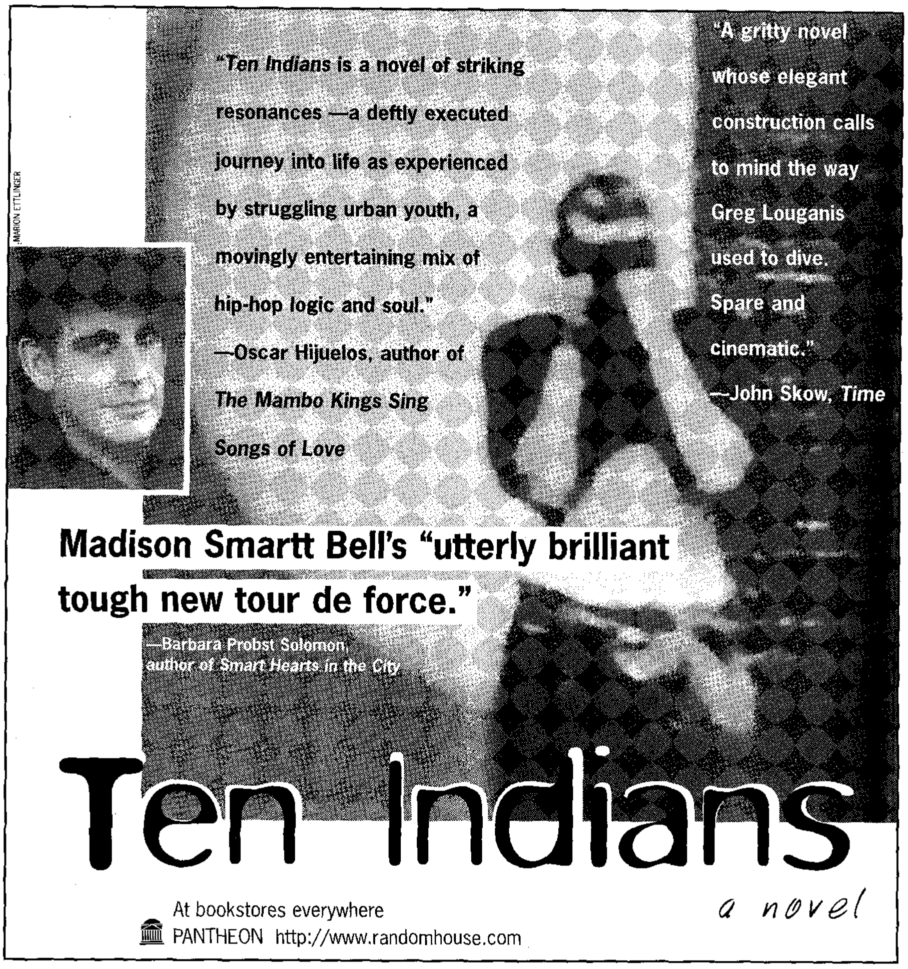
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Dunleavy, Ramón Vargas, and Mr. Nucci; Mr. Rizzi. (Dec. 21 at 8.) . . . **HANSEL AND GRETEL,** performed in English, with Dawn Upshaw, Jennifer Larmore, and Marilyn Zschau; Andrew Davis. (Dec. 23, Dec. 26, and Dec. 30, all at 7, and Dec. 28 at 1:30.) . . . **LA BOHÈME,** with Patricia Racette, Gwynne Geyer, Marcello Giordani, and Anthony Michaels-Moore; Nello Santi. (Dec. 28 at 8 and Dec. 31 at 7:30; choose the latter and you'll experience Christmas Eve at the Café Momus on New Year's Eve, for reasons unfathomable to anyone outside the Met's scheduling office.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

AMATO OPERA COMPANY—Final performances of "La Bohème." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Dec. 21 and Dec. 28 at 7:30 and Dec. 22 and Dec. 29 at 2:30.)

DICAPO OPERA THEATRE—Final performances of "Die Fledermaus," in English. (184 E. 76th St. 288-9438. Dec. 19-21 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 19 and Dec. 21 at 8 and Dec. 20 at 2: Leonard Slatkin conducts Dukas's "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," Barber's Symphony in One Movement, and "Henry V—A Musical Scenario after Shakespeare," an adaptation by Christopher Palmer of the play (much curtailed), interlaced with excerpts from Walton's score for Laurence Olivier's 1944 movie. In these performances, the thespian is Christopher Plummer. . . . ¶ Dec. 31 at 8: Zubin Mehta ascends the podium on New Year's Eve to conduct a generous helping of Mozart—his "Le Nozze di Figaro" Overture, arias from "Figaro" and "Il Re Pastore" (featuring soprano Renée Fleming), and his Violin Concerto No. 3 (with Midori)—as well as light-as-air selections by Johann Strauss, Jr., Kreisler, and Lehár. A benefit concert.

NEW YORK STRING ORCHESTRA—Jaime Laredo conducts the student orchestra in two programs at Carnegie Hall. Dec. 24 at 7: Corelli's "Christmas" Concerto, Dvořák's E-Major Serenade, and works by Bach and Vivaldi. . . . ¶ Dec. 28 at 8: Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's Prologue and Variations for String Orchestra, Haydn's Symphony No. 94 (the "Surprise"), and Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos (featuring Emanuel Ax and Yoko Nozaki Ax).

P. D. Q. BACH—The œuvre of J. S. Bach's principal filial aberration, like that of all composers, has its high and low points. Surely the oratorio "The Seasonings" represents a zenith; given its delicate craftsmanship and its breadth of cultural references (movements that range from the neo-medievalism of "Sumer Is a Cumin Seed" to the colorful Orientalism of "Open Sesame Seeds"), it's no surprise that the piece has maintained a toehold in the repertoire since its rediscovery in the late nineteen-sixties. It occupies a place of honor in this program, which also includes more obscure items from the P. D. Q. Bach archive, including the *cantata singalonga* "Melior Cave Canem" ("Better Watch Out for the Dog") and several carols sort of appropriate to the season. (Carnegie Hall. Dec. 26-27 at 8 and Dec. 29 at 2.)

RECITALS

UNUSUAL TRIOS—Oboist Ronald Roseman, violist Eugene Becker, and pianist Seymour Lipkin perform Arthur Foote's Sarabande and Rigaudon, Charles Martin Loeffler's Two Rhapsodies, and August Klughardt's "Schilflieder." (Morse Hall, Juilliard School, 60 Lincoln Center Plaza, plaza level. Dec. 18 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

TOKYO STRING QUARTET—Mikhail Kopelman is now firmly in place as the ensemble's first violinist. The New York audience gets its first glimpse of the group's new personality in this performance of Schubert's A-Minor Quartet (D. 804), Brahms's A-Minor Quartet (Op. 51, No. 2), and Ezra Laderman's Piano Quartet (with Peter Frankl assisting). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Dec. 18 at 8.)

KALICHSTEIN-LAREDO-ROBINSON TRIO—The threesome offers Brahms's C-Minor Piano Trio; violist Michael Tree assists them in Schumann's Piano Quartet; and violinist Arnold Steinhardt completes the ensemble for Dvořák's A-Major

Piano Quintet (Op. 81). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Dec. 18 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Dec. 19 at 7:30: Leslie Amper and Randall Hodgkinson perform works for piano four-hands: Mozart's F-Major Sonata (K. 497), Schubert's F-Minor Fantasia, and Stravinsky's own reduction of his "Le Sacre du Printemps." . . . ¶ Year's end is always "Brandenburg" season at Bargemusic, but this year Bach's six concertos are divvied up a bit differently. Dec. 22 and Dec. 24 at 7:30: The Concertos No. 1, No. 2, and No. 4. . . . ¶ Dec. 29 at 7:30: The Concertos No. 3, No. 5, and No. 6. . . . ¶ Dec. 31 at 8: All six of the concertos, in a live National Public Radio broadcast from the Brooklyn waterfront. A benefit concert. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

Alexis Pia Gerlach—Cellist, with pianist Colette Valentine. (Landon Gallery, 1926 Broadway, at 64th St., third floor. 873-7846. Dec. 19 at 8.)

Sundays on the Island—A weekly series at a New York maritime enclave. Dec. 22 at noon: Violinist Lara St. John offers bonbons by Kreisler, Sarasate, and others; with pianist Ilan Rechtman. . . . ¶ Dec. 29 at noon: The City Island Chamber Ensemble performs Bach's G-Minor Harpsichord Concerto (with Mr. Rechtman) and Mozart's E-Flat-Major Divertimento (K. 563). (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478.)

Ambrosia Trio—The ensemble offers piano trios by the three great figures of Viennese Classicism: Haydn (in E Major, Hob. XV/28), Mozart (in G Major, K. 564), and Beethoven (in E-Flat Major, Op. 1, No. 1). (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Dec. 22 at 2. Tickets at the door.)

Salon Soirées—Free chamber music in a second-floor music room. Dec. 22 at 6 and 8: Violinist Ayako Yoshido, violist Ori Kam, and cellist Iris Regev collaborate on Mozart's E-Flat-Major Divertimento (K. 563). . . . ¶ Dec. 29 at 6 and 8: Piano trios by Schubert (in E-Flat Major) and others. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St.)

S.E.M. Ensemble—Presenting works by Webern, Feldman, and other twentieth-century composers. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway, second floor. Dec. 22 at 8. For information about tickets, call 718-488-7659.)

At the Mansfield—Free concerts in a casual midtown setting. Dec. 23 at 8: Pianist Samuel Bartos performs Bach's "Goldberg" Variations and fantasies by Karl Weigl. . . . ¶ Dec. 30 at 8: Cellist Maria Kitsopoulos and pianist Ilan Rechtman offer works by Bach, Schumann, and Mr. Rechtman. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St.)

1997
HAPPY NEW YEAR
SLOAN

MICHAEL SLOAN

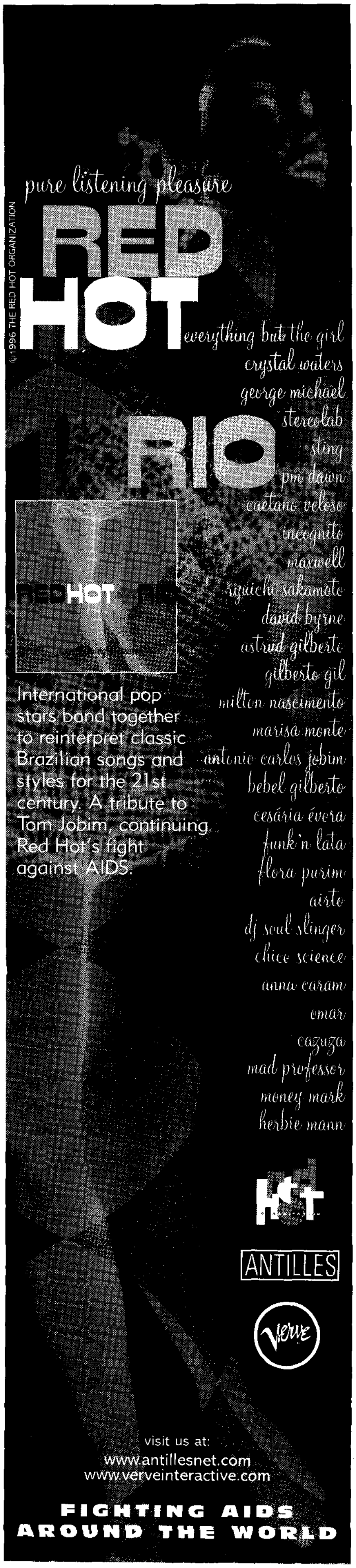
ABOVE AND BEYOND

Eating and Drinking—If you feel the need to take a hiatus from overindulging while still upholding the spirit of the season, you might consider visiting a petite exhibition at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts called "Gimme a Pigfoot (and a Bottle of Beer): Gustation and Libation in Recorded Popular Song." It's made up mostly of album covers adorned with pictures of people and food, and, while these include such gems as the portrait of a woman in whipped cream which graces Herb Alpert's 1965 "Whipped Cream and Other Delights," it's the framed drinking-song-LP jackets that are the real stars. They are both intriguing and amusing—that *is* a picture of the interior of McSorley's Old Ale House on Oscar Brand's 1956 "American Drinking Songs." In his rendition of the traditional "Drunk Last Night," which you can listen to on the twenty-seven-song CD that accompanies the show, Brand makes a comment that a lot of people might consider appropriate to the season: "When I'm drunk I'm happy as can be. Then I am a member of the souse family." (Lincoln Center. 870-1630. Through Feb. 22.)

Auteur! Auteur!—Following a screening of his latest film, "Looking for Richard," Al Pacino takes questions from Annette Insdorf, the chair of Columbia University's Film Division. When the professor has finished, audience members will get their chance to pry into the actor's world. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Dec. 19 at 7:15.)

Readings—Dec. 18 at 7: Social worker turned novelist Fred Leebron and actor turned writer Ethan Hawke read from "Out West" and "The Hottest State," their respective first novels. (Limbo, 47 Avenue A, at 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Dec. 19 at 8: Diamanda Galás, who usually devotes her three-and-a-half-octave vocal range to singing, screeching, and moaning, takes time to declaim selections from her collection of writings, "The Shit of God." (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5488.) . . . ¶ Dec. 31, beginning at noon: The year ends (and begins) with a local tradition, an annual marathon reading—this year, it's "Finnegans Wake" at the Paula Cooper gallery. (534 W. 21st St. No tickets necessary.)

Walks—Big Onion Walking Tours' annual jaunt through the Jewish East Side—this year Seth Kamil is the leader—gives you an excuse to get out of the house on Christmas Day. (Dec. 25 at 1. For more information, call 439-1090.) . . . ¶ Chopsticks vie for attention with noisemakers as Howard Goldberg, of Adventure on a Shoestring, winds up his New Year's Eve tours of Chinatown with dinner at a neighborhood restaurant. (Dec. 31 at 4, 6, and 8. For more information, call 265-2663.)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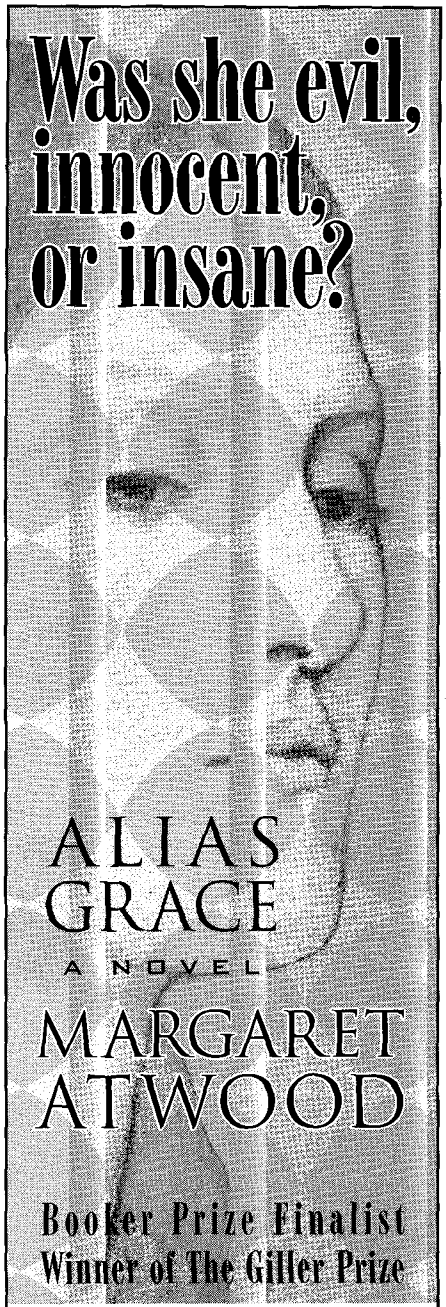

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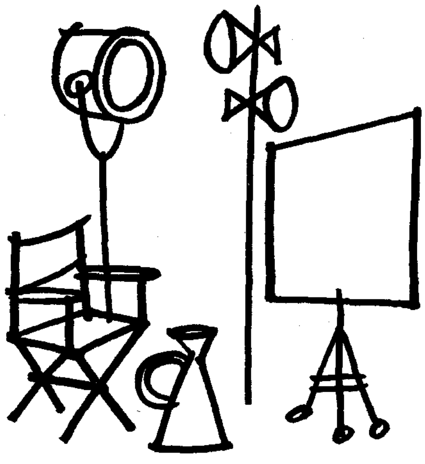

FILMS OPENING

Beavis & Butt-head Do America—The full-length adventures of MTV's animated delinquents. Opening Dec. 20. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

La Cérémonie—A psychological thriller written and directed by Claude Chabrol, about an upper-class couple (Jacqueline Bissett and Jean-Pierre Cassel), their housekeeper (Sandrine Bonnaire), and their nemesis, the local postmistress (Isabelle Huppert). In French. Opening Dec. 20. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

The Evening Star—Fifteen years after the death of her daughter, Aurora Greenway (Shirley MacLaine) deals with her rebellious grandchildren, in writer-director Robert Harling's sequel to "Terms of Endearment," based on Larry McMurtry's novel. Opening Dec. 25. (84th Street Sixplex, East 85th Street, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, State, and Waverly.)

Evita—Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's musical biography of Eva Perón, adapted and directed by Alan Parker and starring Madonna, Jonathan Pryce, and Antonio Banderas. Opening Dec. 25. (Lincoln Square.)

Ghosts of Mississippi—Alec Baldwin plays Bobby DeLaughter, the prosecutor who finally convicted Bryon De La Beckwith (James Woods) for the murder of the civil-rights activist Medgar Evers. With Whoopi Goldberg. Directed by Rob Reiner. Opening Dec. 20.

Hamlet—Kenneth Branagh directs and stars in this four-hour version of the tragedy. With Derek Jacobi, Julie Christie, Richard Briers, and Kate Winslet. Opening Dec. 25. (Paris.)

I'm Not Rappaport—Herb Gardner directs his own adaptation of his 1985 play, about two old men (Walter Matthau and Ossie Davis) who meet daily on a bench in Central Park. Opening Dec. 26. (Regency.)

Marvin's Room—The late Scott McPherson's adaptation of his 1990 play about a pair of sisters (Meryl Streep and Diane Keaton) who reunite when one of them becomes ill. Directed by Jerry Zaks. With Leonardo DiCaprio. Opening Dec. 18.

Message of Love: The Isle of Wight Festival—Reviewed below in Current Films. Opening Dec. 25.

Michael—Reviewed below in Current Films. Opening Dec. 25.

Mother—A comedy written and directed by Albert Brooks, who also stars, as a twice-divorced writer who moves back in with his mom (Debbie Reynolds). Opening Dec. 25. (Chelsea West, Lincoln Square, and 72nd Street East.)

My Fellow Americans—Two former Presidents (Jack Lemmon and James Garner), long-time political enemies, join forces to clear their reputations, in a comedy directed by Peter Segal. Also starring Dan Aykroyd. Opening Dec. 20. (Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

One Fine Day—A single working mom (Michelle Pfeiffer) meets a single working dad (George Clooney), in a romantic comedy directed by Michael Hoffman. Opening Dec. 20. (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet, Lincoln Square, National Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th St. East, and Village East Cinemas.)

The People vs. Larry Flynt—Milos Forman's film about the publisher of *Hustler* (Woody Harrelson), his wife (Courtney Love), and the First Amendment. Opening Dec. 27.

The Portrait of a Lady—Nicole Kidman stars as Henry James's American heiress in Europe, in a picture directed by Jane Campion and written by Laura Jones. Also starring John Malkovich and Barbara Hershey. Opening Dec. 27. (First & 62nd Cinemas and Lincoln Square.)

Scream—Director Wes Craven's latest thriller, about a serial killer in a small California town. Opening Dec. 20.

Some Mother's Son—A picture that traces the friendship of two Irish women (Helen Mirren and Fionnula Flanagan) whose sons have joined the 1981 I.R.A. hunger strike at Maze Prison. Directed by Terry George, who co-wrote the screenplay with Jim Sheridan. Opening Dec. 27.

Les Voleurs—A thriller from André Téchiné, about a French policeman (Daniel Auteuil), his brother (Didier Bezace), the brother's mistress (Laurence Côte), and the mistress's lover (Catherine Deneuve). In French. Opening Dec. 25. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

The Whole Wide World—The relationship of Novalyne Price Ellis (Renee Zellweger) and the writer Robert E. Howard (Vincent D'Onofrio) in the nineteen-thirties is the basis for a film directed by Dan Ireland. Opening Dec. 27. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 42.)

Beautiful Thing—An urban fairy tale, set in London, about first love between two sixteen-year-old boys (Glen Berry and Scott Neal). The movie is a mixed bag, but it has sweet performances and some wonderful moments; the director, Hettie Macdonald, films through rose-colored glasses that capture the humor and charm of the story but not the drama.—B.D. (Quad Cinema.)

Big Night—The actor Stanley Tucci co-wrote (with Joseph Tropiano), co-directed (with Campbell Scott), and co-stars (with Tony Shalhoub) in this elegant, leisurely low-budget comedy about a struggling Italian restaurant run by a pair of immigrant brothers. The unusually happy, relaxed ensemble includes Ian Holm, Isabella Rossellini, Minnie Driver, Allison Janney, and Campbell Scott. The big set piece—a lavish dinner in honor of the singer-bandleader Louis Prima—is a fitting climax to the movie's patient accumulation of savory and blissfully pointless delights: a convincing illustration of how keen pleasure for pleasure's sake can be.—T.R. (9/23/96) (Cinema 3 and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Citizen Ruth—Laura Dern gives a daringly repulsive performance as Ruth Stoops, a trashy drug addict who gets pregnant and becomes a pawn of both pro-life Christian zealots and kooky feminists. Alexander Payne's début comedy has a fresh, fast-paced cynicism reminiscent of Preston Sturges, but the un-Sturges-like topicality tends to weigh it down. Still, Dern is brilliant as the unrepentant glue sniffer, and so is Mary Kay Place as the creepy Christian mom who tries to reform her. With Burt Reynolds as the pedophiliac head of a pro-life ministry, and Tippi Hedren as a jet-setting Gloria Steinem type. Written by Payne and Jim Taylor.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

The Crucible—Nicholas Hytner's florid, hyperbolic film of Arthur Miller's 1953 drama, about the Salem witchcraft trials, reveals the play as a characteristic product of its time—not so much in its anti-McCarthyism as in its sexual politics. The themes that come through most clearly here are fear of women and hatred of youth: the teen-age girls of Salem squeal and writhe, and the hero, John Proctor (Dan-

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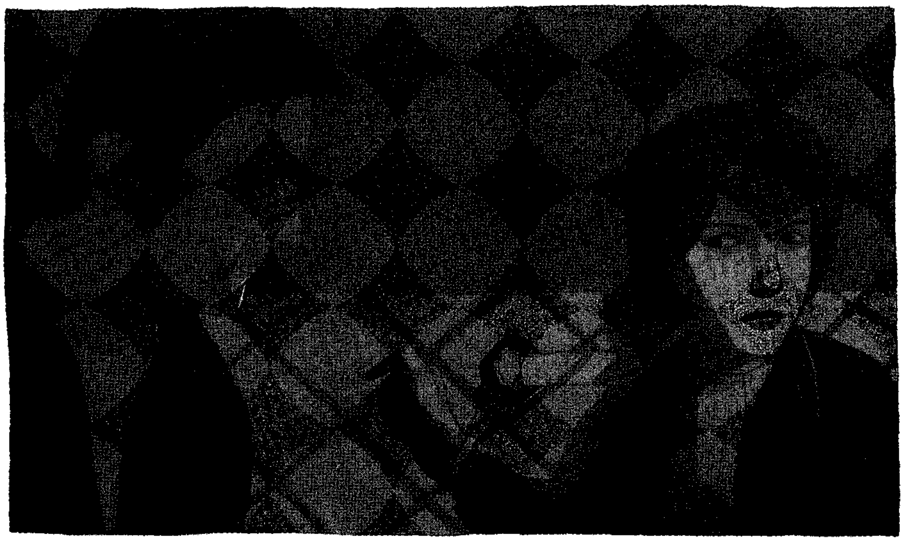
iel Day-Lewis)—the manliest man in the colonies—swings from the gallows. Also with Winona Ryder, Paul Scofield, Joan Allen, and Bruce Davison.—T.R. (12/2/96) (Lincoln Square.)

DAYLIGHT—What makes this disaster flick any different from the rest? For one thing, it involves an explosion in a tunnel between Manhattan and New Jersey—a setting that supplies an especially high number of ways for people to die: flood, fire, suffocation, electrocution, falling chunks of concrete. For another, it stars Sylvester Stallone as a former director of New York City Emergency Medical Services who still hasn't recovered from a death he caused years earlier in his zeal for rescuing. He's obsessed, which is lucky for the trapped survivors, because they're clumsy, hysterical, and mean. (They leave him to die, but he's resurrected.) The special effects pale before the star's vanity. Amy Brenneman, Viggo Mortensen, and Claire Bloom are among the large cast of people who let him down.—S.K. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 34th Street Showplace.)



Opening Dec. 25, Daniel Auteuil and Laurence Côte in "Les Voleurs."

HERVÉ BLONDON

THE ENGLISH PATIENT—Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, from the novel by Michael Ondaatje, this long and searching movie tangles together a number of stories and characters: Almásy (Ralph Fiennes) and Katherine (Kristin Scott Thomas), who have an affair in North Africa before the Second World War; a French-Canadian nurse (Juliette Binoche) who cares for the badly burned Almásy after the war, and the Sikh soldier (Naveen Andrews) *she* has an affair with; and the mysterious Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), a scavenging thief who appears to know the secrets of Almásy's past. The triumph of the film lies not just in the force and range of the performances but in Minghella's creation of an intimate epic: vast landscapes mingle with the minute details of desire, and the combination is transfixing.—A.L. (11/25/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 3, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Village East Cinemas.)

101 DALMATIANS—The remake from hell. In 1961 Disney made a perfectly respectable and surprisingly mush-free animated version of Dodie Smith's novel. In the new live-action version, directed by Stephen Herek, the dogs no longer talk but merely cock their heads and bark, reminding us that Dalmatians are not exactly the brightest of their species; and the humans, led by Jeff Daniels and Joely Richardson, go through the whole affair with a sort of dazed, disbelieving look, as well they might. In her initial scenes as Cruella DeVil, Glenn Close displays a certain scarlet relish for her own monstrosity; but soon the film betrays her, too, reducing her to the level of undignified stooge and landing her in a variety of noxious substances. By the end, the charm and delicacy of the original cartoon have long been replaced by laborious gross-outs. Is this now official Disney policy?—A.L. (12/9/96) (86th Street East Twin, Gotham Cinema, Guild, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

JERRY MAGUIRE—Tom Cruise plays the title character, who is a glib, cocky agent for professional athletes. In the fluid opening scenes, the hero undergoes a yuppie dark night of the soul, reëxamines his values, and gets fired; Cruise looks uncharacteristically relaxed, and the movie, which was written and directed by Cameron Crowe, promises to be something unusual—a comedy about the spiritual crisis of a shallow man. But the star quickly reverts to his familiar mannerisms: the intense, feisty, can-do shtick that has served him so well. And Crowe loses control of the fragile comic tone. The picture winds up being merely a diffident, sweet-natured failure. Also with Renee Zellweger, Cuba Gooding, Jr., and Bonnie Hunt.—T.R. (12/16/96) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

JINGLE ALL THE WAY—Even by the standard of Hollywood's traditional Christmas cynicism, Brian Levant's unfunny comedy aims remarkably low, and it still doesn't hit. This is the tale of an executive (Arnold Schwarzenegger) so overworked that he has forgotten to buy his son's Christmas present, a revolting purple doll named Turbo Man. So he spends Christmas Eve in the company of other frustrated parents—notably a post-office worker played by Sinbad—scouring the land for Turbo Men. A few of Sinbad's early lines suggest that the picture will hold such commercial mania up to mockery, but Randy Kornfield's script and Levant's flailing direction quickly yield to the same frenzy that envelops the hero. Why is it that Schwarzenegger's attempts at comedy are even scarier than his sci-fi thrillers?—A.L. (Baronet, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Waverly. . . . ¶ Coronet and 34th St. East; through Dec. 19.)

MARS ATTACKS!—There's a strong whiff of self-destructiveness in Tim Burton's surprisingly feeble alien-invasion comedy—of a desire to use an enormous budget and a glittering cast to as little purpose as possible. Working from a joke-deprived script by Jonathan Gems, the director seems intent on validating the primitive aesthetic of Edward D. Wood, Jr. (the famously incompetent auteur of "Plan 9 from Outer Space," and the subject of Burton's affectionate 1994 biopic, "Ed Wood"). This movie is meant to be a kind of anti-entertainment: a subversion of everything that pictures like "Independence Day" represent. For Burton, cheesiness is next to godliness; unfortunately, his willful ineptitude isn't nearly as funny as Wood's pure cluelessness. With Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close, Annette Bening, Martin Short, Michael J. Fox, Sarah Jessica Parker, Pierce Brosnan, Danny DeVito, Rod Steiger, Lisa Marie, and Tom Jones (as himself).—T.R. (12/16/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

MESSAGE OF LOVE: THE ISLE OF WIGHT FESTIVAL—Murray Lerner's documentary on the legendary 1970 rock festival captures performances by, among others, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix (about two weeks before his death), Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, and The Who—just about all of them sensational. The five-day festival has entered the histories as the end point of the peace-and-love era, and the film brilliantly documents the tensions between the promoters (who went bankrupt) and the more than six hundred thousand fans (who, for the most part, refused to pay the three-pound entrance fee—they tore down the corrugated fences). In taking a look at this poorly organized, hilariously scattered event, Lerner offers a fascinating glimpse into the fate of the rebellious and destructive rock of the sixties: it disintegrated even as it was being captured on camera in all its grubby, mud-soaked splendor.—B.D. (Film Forum; starting Dec. 25.)

MICHAEL—Holiday candy from Nora Ephron, about a cynical tabloid reporter (William Hurt) who goes to Iowa to cover a story about an angel (John Travolta); it pointlessly reheats half a dozen old screwball and sentimental plots. The one new joke—and it's a thin one—is that this angel is no halo-wearing, harp-strumming innocent: he specializes in fighting and sex. Travolta throws himself into it, but the script is so vulgar and sophomoric that it makes him look like an over-eager first-time actor. (Example: whenever the angel gets aroused, he struts around and emits a smell that is said to resemble freshly baked cookies.) Meanwhile, Hurt begins and ends the film without a personality, so that his humanization is a matter of complete indifference to the audience. Andie MacDowell is the love interest; in one of the film's many gestures of forced whimsy, she's a dog trainer masquerading as an angel expert, but she really wants to be a country-music star.—S.K. (Starting Dec. 25.)

ORSON WELLES: THE ONE-MAN BAND—A documentary about the director's final years, compiled by Vassili Silovic from Welles's private archive of project ideas, sketches, and unfinished films. (Film Forum; through Dec. 24.)

THE PREACHER'S WIFE—Penny Marshall's remake of the 1947 comedy "The Bishop's Wife," with Whitney Houston in the title role, Courtney B. Vance as her husband, and Denzel Washington as the angel Dudley. (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Embassy 2, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

RANSOM—Ron Howard's grinding picture could have been a snappy little hostage thriller but decided, somewhere along the way, to take itself terribly seriously. Mel Gibson plays the wealthy owner of an airline, whose young son (Brawley Nolte) is kidnapped by a gang of good-for-nothings. Rene Russo suffers from a woefully underpowered role as the boy's mother, Gary Sinise struggles to convince us that he has the makings of a scuzzy villain, and Gibson himself has to stand there and act tragic in closeup.—A.L. (11/11/96) (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 4, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

RIDICULE—The peasants on the swampy, disease-ridden estate of a country-bumpkin aristocrat (Charles Berling) are dying off, so he goes to Versailles to beg Louis XVI for permission to drain his land. But in order to get an audience with the king he must paint a beauty spot on his cheek, learn to dance, and outdo rival nobles in cruel contests of wit. Until the halfway point, Patrice Leconte's flawed but ingenious exploration of the quest for insider power depicts it as shabby, merciless, and burnout-inducing; then Remi Waterhouse's screenplay buries the comedy's strong premise un-

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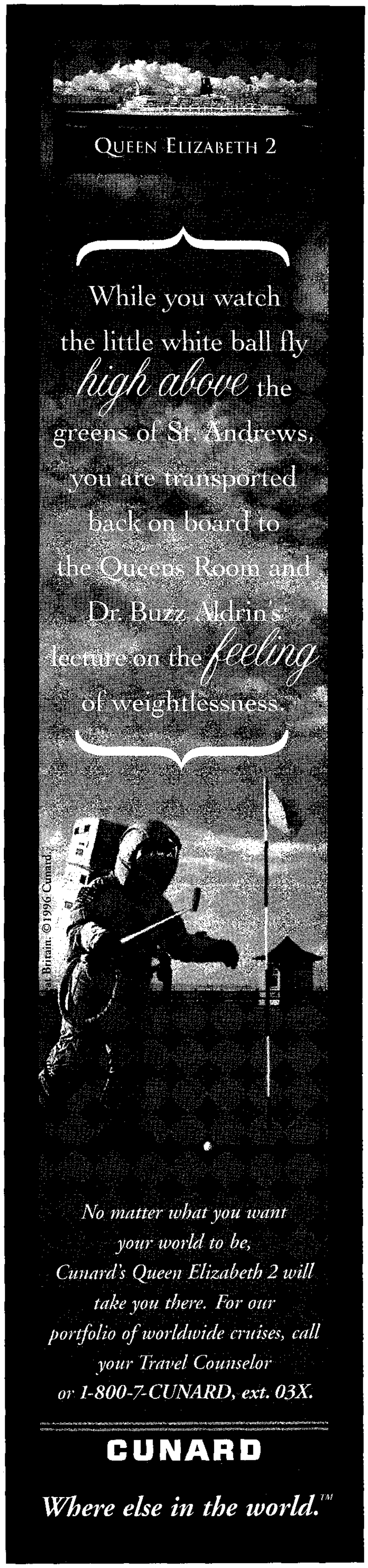
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der a simplistic, ahistorical gloss that makes it feel like an intellectual "Rocky." With Fanny Ardant as a worldly countess, and the beautiful, wooden Judith Godreche as a righteous scientist—a token of the Enlightenment. In French.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 68th St. Playhouse.)

Secrets & Lies—Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), the heroine of Mike Leigh's broadest and most ambitious film to date, decides after the death of her adoptive mother to seek her biological one. The quest turns up Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn), who freaks out: Hortense is middle-class and black, Cynthia working-class and white. Jean-Baptiste gives a quiet, pacific performance; Blethyn deals in spasms of exaggeration which belong in another film altogether. Still, there is a fine supporting cast, and they all gather in the final scene, a cathartic barbecue that starts off as nicely choreographed light comedy and darkens to a Bergman-like chorus of wailing women and slightly overcooked dialogue.—A.L. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Shine—The hero of Scott Hicks's absorbing biographical film is the Australian concert pianist David Helfgott (played, at different stages of his life, by Alex Rafalowicz, Noah Taylor, and Geoffrey Rush), who suffered a severe breakdown, spent years in mental institutions, and then, improbably, resumed his career. Although the movie's swiftness and lightness are pleasing, the over-all image they create is indistinct: it just evaporates in your head when the lights come up. Also with Armin Mueller-Stahl, Lynn Redgrave, and John Gielgud (who's in especially buoyant comic form).—T.R. (12/2/96) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Square.)

Space Jam—Produced by Ivan Reitman and more assembled than directed by Joe Pytka, this big-budget attempt at a merchandising bonanza doesn't begin to approach the artistry of "Who Framed Roger Rabbit": the cartoon characters never seem fully integrated into the live action—they just hang there. The story, in which Michael Jordan, the basketball superstar, saves Bugs Bunny and friends from aliens who want them for their Disney-like amusement park, sacrifices the anarchic spirit of Chuck Jones, who animated the Warner Bros. classics of the forties and fifties, to the current Warners marketing team in ways so obvious that they make Disney look humble.—B.D. (Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Star Trek: First Contact—In the eighth installment of the "Star Trek" series, the trusty Enterprise, headed by that existentialist philosopher manqué Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart), is engaged in mortal conflict with the Borg, a race of merciless world-destroyers who have travelled to Earth in the year 2063 to stop the human race from making first contact with other beings. Picard and his deeply uninteresting crew are called upon to thwart this mischief; the only things that stand in their way are the dimness of the film (which leaves you indifferent to the fate of the characters, let alone that of the solar system) and the purring villainy of the top Borg, played by Alice Krige as if she wanted to prove that time-warping is good for your sex life—for a few minutes, she makes this tired movie writhe. The director, Jonathan Frakes, also stars as one of Picard's officers. With James Cromwell and Alfre Woodward as a pair of earthlings.—A.L. (12/9/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ East 85th Street; through Dec. 24.)

Swingers—A funny, boys-on-the-site ode to friendship and cruising for girls. The writer, Jon Favreau, co-stars with Vince Vaughn, a handsome new actor, and they're hilarious—but the film isn't a bubbleheaded comedy. The director, Doug Liman, follows his characters through swinging-singles hangouts from Hollywood to Vegas with a neon-soaked camera; beneath all the hip talk and the funny predicaments, his two heroes are wistful, stargazing romantics.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center, 62nd & Broadway, and Sutton.)

ALSO PLAYING

BREAKING THE WAVES (reviewed in our issue of 11/18/96): Angelika Film Center. . . . **THE CHAMBER:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE FUNERAL:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **THE GARDEN OF THE FINZI-CONTINIS:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **LAST MAN STANDING** (9/23/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LOOKING FOR RICHARD:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Waverly. . . . **LOSING CHASE:** Quad Cinema. . . . **MAXIMUM RISK:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MICHAEL COLLINS** (10/14/96): Beekman. . . . **MICROCOSMOS:** Film Forum 3. . . . **THE MIRROR HAS TWO FACES:** Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld. . . . **SET IT OFF:** Criterion Center, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **A SINGLE GIRL:** Quad Cinema. . . . **SLEEPERS** (11/4/96): 72nd Street East and Village Theatre VII. . . . **SLING BLADE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THAT THING YOU DO!** (10/7/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **TO GILLIAN ON HER 37TH BIRTHDAY:** 59th Street East Cinema and Worldwide Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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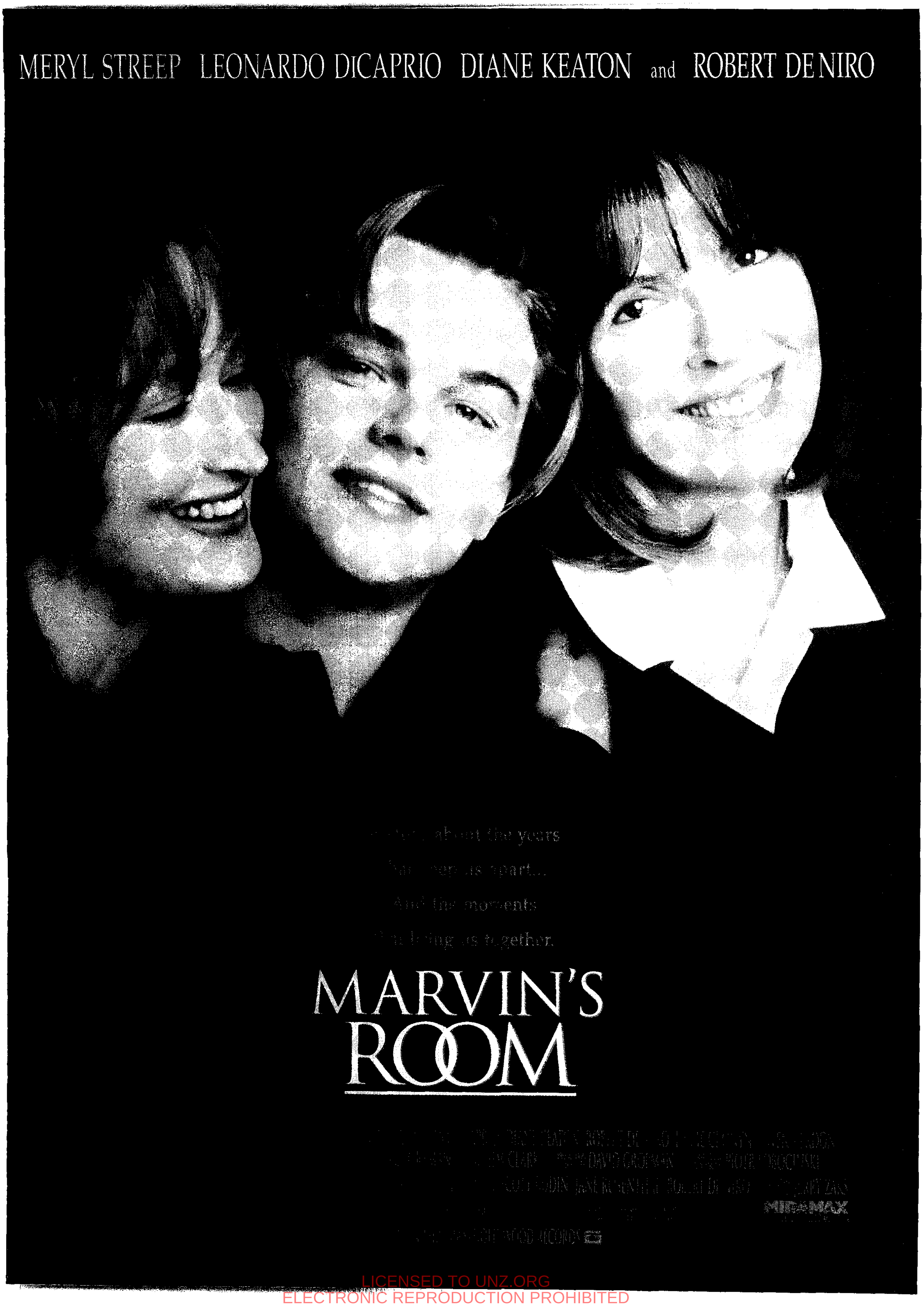
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Baronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy I, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.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REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

The Arrangement (1969)—Kirk Douglas is a successful Los Angeles advertising man in his early forties who tries to kill himself, and as he recovers we begin to see the tensions that have made him self-destructive—on one side a girl (Faye Dunaway) who is contemptuous of his lucrative job and conventional life, and on the other a wife (Deborah Kerr) who wants security, and in the background his Greek immigrant father (Richard Boone), who measures worth in dollars. Even more blatantly than the novel, by Elia Kazan, this movie, which he directed, is a noisy glorification of anguish over selling out. Kazan probably believes that people can't hear unless they're shouted at. He mistakes the noise for having something to say.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Dec. 18.)

Auntie Mame (1958)—Uniquely awful: a stridently flamboyant (yet actually ultraconventional) comedy that swept into the No. 1 spot at the box office for 1959 and has filled rep theatres for decades since. It plays like a camp coronation of Rosalind Russell, who masticates the title role of a Beekman Place bohemian whose cushy brand of nonconformity saves her orphaned nephew from a life of Babbitry. She delivers her lines with a solipsistic virtuosity that precludes any hint of openness or spontaneity, the qualities that Mame and the movie are supposed to espouse. Morton Da Costa's direction accentuates the picture's excruciating heroine worship—every sequence ends with a spotlit portrait of the star. The combination of outrageous artifice and domestic sappiness has made the movie a holiday perennial. (Audiences howl when Coral Browne, as Mame's best friend, remarks that she's playing "the tragic queen.") With Forrest Tucker, Peggy Cass, and Fred Clark; the script is by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, who adapted the Jerome Lawrence–Robert E. Lee stage version of Patrick Dennis's novel.—M.S. (A Different Light Bookstore; Dec. 22.)

Bell, Book and Candle (1958)—An erratic light comedy with a spellbinding wild streak, centered on occult rites, New York City at Christmastime, and a magical cat named Pyewacket. It's hard to resist Kim Novak, in slinky beatnik chic, as she bewitches a straight-arrow publisher played by James Stewart; she's part of a witch-and-warlock underground operating merrily in Greenwich Village. Among its other members, the booming Hermione Gingold and the furtively funny Elsa Lanchester are perfectly matched oddballs; so are the serenely addlepated Ernie Kovacs, as an authority on sorcery, and Jack Lemmon, as an ebulliently volatile young sorcerer. Stewart, playing the foil, deserves better material, and the movie's midsection is perfunctory. But the fun quotient is high, and there's an undeniable frisson to the way this movie's magic subculture echoes the closeted gay world of the fifties: it's easy to view the Zodiac Club as a gay bar. Daniel Taradash adapted the screenplay from John Van Druten's play; Richard Quine directed.—M.S. (A Different Light Bookstore; Dec. 29.)

Bells Are Ringing (1960)—Dean Martin, at his musical-comedy peak, is both intuitive and modulated as a blocked playwright in this classy adaptation of the Betty Comden–Adolph Green–Jules Styne Broadway hit; and Judy Holliday's empathy and warmth put over the plot, about an answering-service operator who can't resist improving the lives of her customers. The farce complications are wispy and silly: they involve bookies who are using classical-music titles as a code and a couple of over-zealous vice investigators. But the (mostly) fetching score includes "The Party's Over" and "Just in Time"—Martin and Holliday's duet on the latter is a mellow romantic classic. Vincente Minnelli makes use of the wide screen with graceful, fluid movement, and he helps Martin anchor his usual breeziness with just the right amount of anxiety. (Martin, like his playwright character, knew the fear of going solo after working with a partner.) With Jean Stapleton, Eddie Foy, Jr., Fred Clark, and Frank Gorshin (doing a broad Brando impersonation).—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Dec. 28 and Dec. 30.)

Fists in the Pocket (1966)—This first film by Marco Bellocchio must surely be one of the most astonishing directorial débuts in the history of movies, yet it is hard to know how to react to it. The direction is exhilaratingly cool and assured, and the whole movie is charged with temperament, but the material is wild. It's about a bourgeois family of diseased monsters; epileptic fits multiply between bouts of matricide, fratricide, and incest. The material is so savage that the movie often seems intended to be funny, but *why* it was so intended isn't clear. Music by Ennio Morricone. In Italian.—P.K. (Cinema Village; Dec. 24.)

It Should Happen to You (1954)—Judy Holliday in a pleasantly erratic satirical comedy. The heroine, who yearns for celebrity, takes her life savings and places her name—Gladys Glover—in giant letters across a billboard in Columbus Circle. Before long, she is as inescapably in the public eye as one of the Gabors. She also tosses about in romantic indecision: should she give her heart to an honest documentary filmmaker (Jack Lemmon, in his Hollywood début) and say farewell to the big time, or should she surrender herself to the sudsy embraces of a soap manufacturer (Peter Lawford)? George Cukor directed, from a script by Garson Kanin.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Dec. 29.)

Shoah (1985)—Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour-and-twenty-three-minute documentary epic is made up of interviews with people who have knowledge of the Nazi extermination centers—whether as slave laborers, railroad workers, technicians, bureaucrats, or just onlookers. The film has fine, painful moments, and it's widely regarded as a masterpiece. But some may feel that it lacks the moral complexity of a great work, and may also find it logy and diffuse, and exhausting right from the start. Divided into Part I (four hours and thirty-three minutes) and Part II (four hours and fifty minutes). In Polish, French, German, English, Hebrew, and Yiddish, with English subtitles where necessary.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Dec. 21-24.)

Yolanda and the Thief (1945)—Fred Astaire was paired with Lucille Bremer in this stupefyingly baroque M-G-M musical set in a mythical South American country and encumbered with what its director, Vincente Minnelli, once called "an insane plot." Astaire is cast howlingly against type as a crooked gambler; when he learns that the beautiful heiress Yolanda believes she has a guardian angel, he pretends to be the angel in order to swindle her. The picture is the most extreme of the big-musical mistakes of the forties; it's full of surreal dreams and fiestas, and, because it goes beyond parody, it perhaps needs to be seen by anyone who wants to know what killed the M-G-M musicals.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Dec. 26-27.)

Zardoz (1974)—Sean Connery in a loincloth as the only virile man in an elitist commune of the future, dominated by hyper-intellectual immortal women. John Boorman, who wrote, produced, and directed this lushly photographed piece of twaddle, appears to be worried about mankind's losing its fighting strength. With ideas skimmed off the top of various systems of thought, "Zardoz" is a glittering cultural trash pile, and probably the most gloriously fatuous movie since "The Oscar"—though the passages between laughs droop.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Dec. 24 and Dec. 26.)

Ziegfeld Follies (1946)—Vincente Minnelli directs an extraordinary cast in this plotless, often tedious M-G-M musical revue. Some high spots: Fred Astaire dances "Limehouse Blues"; he and Gene Kelly do a routine together ("The Babbitt and the Bromide," by George and Ira

Linda McCartney, *Fear Crawled*, 1973
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photographs by
LINDA McCARTNEY
November 8, 1996 – February 9, 1997

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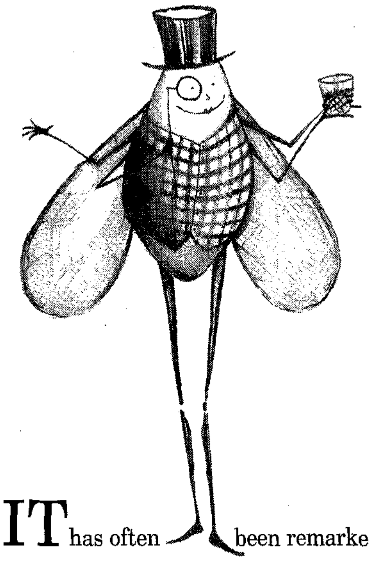

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IT has often been remarked that devotees of The Macallan Malt Whisky nurture an almost mystical belief in the 'water of life' qualities of their favourite dram. But seldom has it found such expression as in the following true anecdote kindly related to us by Mr C. Wemyss of Ravenhead, Notts.

'My friend Hamish, at a pre-Christmas party in my garden, found a fly had landed in his glass, and drowned. "Don't worry, Hamish," said I. "Have another Macallan in a clean glass." "I shall do nothing of the sort," he replied, removing the tiny creature from his glass and sipping the sherry-gold elixir.

"The Macallan never hurt a fly, and nor does a fly hurt The Macallan!" Ten minutes later indeed the insect stirred and flew off.

"There you are," said Hamish triumphantly. "And now you can give me a *gnat's more*." '

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Gershwin); and Judy Garland appears at her most lighthearted in the dance-and-patter number—"A Great Lady Has an Interview." The other performers include Lena Horne, Fanny Brice, Esther Williams, Jimmy Durante, Lucille Ball, and William Powell as Ziegfeld up in heaven dreaming this big bash.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Dec. 28-29.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Films directed by Elia Kazan. Dec. 18: "The Arrangement" (†) and "The Visitors" (1972).... Dec. 19-22: "Viva Zapata!" (1952) and "A Face in the Crowd" (1957).... Dec. 23-24: "America America" (1963).... Dec. 25-26: "The Last Tycoon" (1976).... ¶ From Dec. 27: "Walkabout" (1971, Nicolas Roeg).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Dec. 23: Recent films from the former Soviet republics.... ¶ Through Dec. 31: Recent films from Germany.... ¶ Dec. 19 at 3 and 6: "Streetcar Stories" (1995, Matt Martinez).... ¶ Dec. 24 at 2:30 and Dec. 26 at 6: "Zardoz" (†).... ¶ Dec. 26 at 2:30 and 8: "The Shining" (1980, Stanley Kubrick).... ¶ A program of films starring Judy Holliday. Dec. 27 at 2:30 and Dec. 29 at 5: "Phffft" (1954, Mark Robson).... Dec. 27 at 6: "Adam's Rib" (1949, George Cukor).... Dec. 27 at 8: "Born Yesterday" (1950, Cukor).... Dec. 28 at 2: "The Marrying Kind" (1952, Cukor).... Dec. 28 at 5 and Dec. 30 at 2:30: "Bells Are Ringing" (†).... Dec. 29 at 2: "It Should Happen to You" (†).... Dec. 30 at 6: "The Solid Gold Cadillac" (1956, Richard Quine).... Dec. 31 at 2: "Full of Life" (1956, Quine).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Dec. 21: Recent films from Spain; all in Spanish, with English subtitles.... ¶ Dec. 19 at 8:30: "Mugshot" (1996, Matt Mahurin).... ¶ Weekend showings for children. Dec. 21-22 and Dec. 29 at 2: "The Secret Garden" (1949, Fred M. Wilcox).... ¶ Dec. 21 at 6:30, Dec. 22 at 4, and Dec. 23-24 at 12:30 and 6:15: "Shoah" (†).... ¶ A program of musicals directed by Vincente Minnelli. Dec. 26 at 2 and 6:30 and Dec. 27 at 4:15 and 8:45: "Meet Me in St. Louis" (1944).... Dec. 26 at 4:15 and 8:45 and Dec. 27 at 2 and 6:30: "Yolanda and the Thief" (†).... Dec. 28 at 4 and 8:15 and Dec. 29 at 6:15: "Ziegfeld Follies" (†).... Dec. 28 at 6:15 and Dec. 29 at 4 and 8:30: "The Pirate" (1948).... Dec. 30 at 2 and 6:30 and Dec. 31 at 4:15 and 8:45: "An American in Paris" (1951).... Dec. 30 at 4:15 and 8:45 and Dec. 31 at 2 and 6:30: "Brigadoon" (1954).... ¶ Dec. 28 at 11 and 1:30: "The Circus" (1928, Charlie Chaplin; silent).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Dec. 21-22 at 3, Dec. 23-24 and Dec. 26-27 at 2, Dec. 28-29 at 2 and 4:30, and Dec. 30-31 at 2: Seven different programs of short animated films by Max and Dave Fleischer.

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Dec. 22 at 7, the feature will be "Auntie Mame" (†); on Dec. 29 at 7, "Bell, Book and Candle" (†).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—Through Dec. 19: "The Seven Samurai" (1954, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese).... Dec. 20-21: "Beauty and the Beast" (1946, Jean Cocteau; in French) and "Orpheus" (1949, Cocteau; in French).... Dec. 22-23: "Jules and Jim" (1962, François Truffaut; in French) and "The 400 Blows" (1959, Truffaut; in French).... Dec. 24: "Fists in the Pocket" (†) and "Il Posto" (1961, Ermanno Olmi; in Italian).... Dec. 25: "The Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French) and "La Grande Illusion" (1937, Renoir; in French).... Dec. 26: "Rashomon" (1951, Kurosawa; in Japanese) and "Dodes'ka-den" (1971, Kurosawa; in Japanese).... Dec. 27-28: "La Strada" (1954, Federico Fellini; in Italian) and "L'Avventura" (1959, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian).... Dec. 29-30: "Smiles of a Summer Night" (1955, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish) and "The Virgin Spring" (1959, Bergman; in Swedish).... Dec. 31: "The Wages of Fear" (1953, Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French) and "Diabolique" (1955, Clouzot; in French).

At MOMA, a program of films starring Judy Holliday.

RICHARD MERKIN

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Films by Satyajit Ray. Dec. 18-19 at 6 and Dec. 26 at 6 and 10: "Pather Panchali" (1955).... Dec. 18-19 at 8 and Dec. 27 at 6 and 10: "Aparajito" (1956).... Dec. 18-19 at 10 and Dec. 28 at 6 and 10: "The World of Apu" (1959).... Dec. 20 and Dec. 29 at 6 and 10: "The Music Room" (1958).... Dec. 21 at 6 and 10 and Dec. 30 at 8: "Two Daughters" (1961).... Dec. 22 at 6 and 10 and Dec. 30 at 6: "Devi" (1960).... Dec. 23 at 6 and 10 and Dec. 30 at 10: "The Big City" (1963).... Dec. 24 at 6 and 10 and Dec. 31 at 6: "Charulata" (1964).... Dec. 31 at 8: "The Middleman" (1975).... ¶ Dec. 19 and Dec. 26 at 7: "The Boys of St. Vincent" (1994, John N. Smith).... ¶ Dec. 20 at 8: Films by Ian Hugo, Larry Jordan, Helen Levitt, and Willard Maas.... ¶ Dec. 20-24 and Dec. 26-29 at 8: "Make Way for Tomorrow" (1937, Leo McCarey).... ¶ Dec. 20-21 at 10: "Split in Half" (1995, Istvan Antal).... ¶ Dec. 21-22 and Dec. 28-29 at 3:40: "Tokyo Story" (1953, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese).... ¶ Dec. 21 at 8: Films by Dwinell Grant, Ken Jacobs, and Hollis Frampton.... ¶ Dec. 22 at 8: Films by Joseph Cornell.... ¶ Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 at 7 and 9:30: "Landscape in the Mist" (1988, Theo Angelopoulos; in Greek).... ¶ Dec. 27 at 8 and Dec. 28 at 6: Films by Matthias Mueller and Luther Price.... ¶ Dec. 28-29 at 8: Films by Mark Street, Lynne Sachs, Jennifer Reeves, and David Gatten.

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

AN EXULTATION OF BOOKS

From opposite ends of the country come a pair of dispatches suggesting that reports of the demise of the book business have been getting ahead of themselves:

CHRISTMAS a year ago was not a happy time for readers and writers in Westchester County. Fox & Sutherland, the last of the county's old-time bookstore-cum-stationers—a place where it was possible to buy a volume of Akhmatova's poetry and the paper to gift-wrap it in—closed its doors, leaving dejected customers with nowhere to go but the dark Satanic malls. Suddenly, a Capraesque guardian angel appeared: Irwin Hersch, a partner in Coliseum Books, one of Manhattan's last great independent bookstores. Rehiring the dismissed staff of the departed F. & S., he opened a new store down the street, and thus was born the Mt. Kisco Book Co.

The handsome new establishment was an instant success, giving readers the sense that their bookstore belonged to the community, and not a corporation. Local writers were happy to sign books, readers to buy them. Then, at 2:30 A.M. on the Monday before Thanksgiving, Hersch got a phone call informing him that his store was burning to the ground, the victim of an electrical fire in the next-door ice-cream parlor. The Christmas inventory was cinders; customers and staff watched in tears as the ruin was hosed down.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TIM BOWER

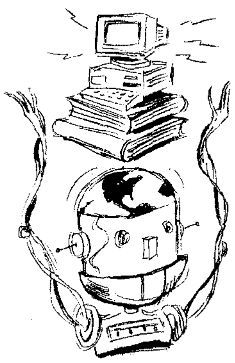
Hersch is not the kind of fellow to let a little thing like a conflagration spoil his holiday season. Moved by the messages of commiseration that jammed his answering machine, and noticing that the old Fox & Sutherland premises were still vacant, he went in with paint pots, scrub brushes, and a huge outpouring of good will from the locals, who offered time and money. So much for clichés about suburban apathy. Sounding moved and astonished by what he calls "the most amazing experience of my life," Hersch, who looks more like a kindly version of Walter Matthau than like Jimmy Stewart's George Bailey, confesses that it might just have been worth having his store go up in flames to discover how much the town cared for a bookstore "that isn't just a money-grabbing place." The Mt. Kisco Book Co. reopened for business in its temporary quarters on December 6th—St. Nicholas Day.

•

THE nerve center of Amazon.com Books, the world's biggest electronic bookseller, is on the fourth floor of an old building in Seattle. Reached by what local messenger services agree may well be the slowest elevator in town, it is a warren of offices, furnished with desks assembled from door panels and two-by-fours, that reflects a business whose accelerated rate of growth is remarkable even by the heady standards of Seattle's software startups. Two years ago, Jeff Bezos, the company's founder and C.E.O., left Wall Street, moved to the nimbus of Microsoft, in suburban Seattle, and, naming his new company after the world's largest river, began building Amazon.com's software systems in his garage, with five employees. They went on-line in July of 1995, and have since moved four times—most recently to their present offices, which are supplemented by a forty-six-thousand-square-foot warehouse. Bezos, who grins a lot, now commands a hundred and sixty employees—including editors, marketers, programmers, and packers. At thirty-two, he is trying to cope with an annual sales revenue that *Business Week* has pegged at seventeen million dollars.

Bezos argues that the convenience of shopping on the Internet will encourage people to buy more books. Amazon.com promises one-click shopping for 1.1 million of the 1.5 million books currently published in English. (Barnes & Noble superstores stock about a hundred and seventy thousand titles.)

But Amazon.com's biggest boon may be to publishers—an end to returns, which can consume half the volume of a front list. The company's warehouse stocks only its own list of best-sellers—approximately two hundred titles at any given time—and orders everything else. And, by preselling upcoming titles through E-mail recommendations, Bezos promises to provide publishers with "advance information about public demand." For the first time, he says, publishers will be able to accurately calculate initial print runs. That, he expects, will drive the price of books down dramatically.

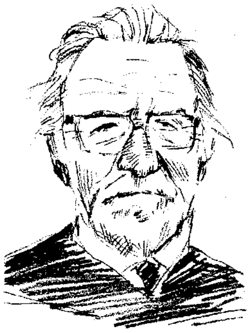


Expanding on the truism that the Internet has made everyone an author, Bezos aims to turn everyone into a reviewer and a salesperson as well. Amazon.com welcomes people who run

Web pages, from mainstream magazines to cyberjunkies, to pitch in as "associates." They receive a referral fee of eight per cent for every sale they generate. In this fashion, as Bezos foresees things, the river may soon become an ocean. "We may not know what the best book on model rocketry or Labrador retrievers is," he says. "But there's already a Website out there run by a passionate person who does."

THE HOUSE OF JOSÉ DONOSO

The lives of writers fascinate us endlessly, mostly because their writings provide us with ready-made maps and self-scrutinies. It is always ironic that it takes a writer's death to bring completeness to his presence on the bookshelf. The irony is particularly pointed in the death, at age seventy-two, of the Chilean novelist José Donoso, in Santiago, on the seventh of December, for in his novels the stories that his characters leave behind them in the air generally prove more durable than the fleeting selves that they are seeking.



José Donoso

Donoso must be counted as one of the spinal writers of the extraordinary boom in Latin-American fiction which spread through the reading world from the mid-sixties on, with the appearance of the novels of Donoso, Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez, and Guillermo Cabrera Infante—writing that made it suddenly seem as if the human imagination had taken refuge in Latin America. Donoso, however, had embarked on his career in the fifties, so that when the attention of international publishers turned southward he was already there to be discovered, and to be liberally translated.

Donoso was born into the Chilean bourgeoisie, which, although it was in decline, still occupied vast decaying houses peopled with relatives and servants, houses that were in themselves microcosms of the human condition. Shunning the panoramic inventiveness of his contemporaries, Donoso set the majority of his novels in such eroding households, in which the inner worlds of the inhabitants superimpose themselves on one another in the form of a web of conflicting stories. His characters, trapped in their various roles and obligations, try to struggle free by way of the fictions with which they surround themselves, the masks and disguises they assume toward each other. The predominant image in his novels is of houses as engulfing presences that enslave the members of the household in their own demanding rituals—houses as theatres for the dramas and deceptions that are enacted in them. As he himself once said, "I think a novelist is a man who does not want to teach, or say something, but wants to know something."

Like most of the Latin-American writers of his generation, Donoso spent much of his writing life in exile, part of it made inevitable by the Pinochet regime in Chile. He had gone to an English school in Santiago (where to his horror he was made to play cricket), and, after attending Princeton in his twenties, he frequently visited the United States. Although he spoke and wrote a wonderful English, exile only made him more Chilean: it was the Spanish language that he enriched and extended.

In a memoir he published in *The Wilson Quarterly* in 1987, during one of his sweet-sour stays in Washington, Donoso wrote of a period in his childhood when he went to live in an old house in Santiago occupied by a clutch of old aunts, a tangle of other relatives, and an eccentric group of servants. His account of that reality is at one with the worlds of his novels: "I once asked [the servants] why none of them had blue eyes like my aunts. They replied that only the ladies could afford to buy the blue glass cups in which they kept their eyes at night to make them more blue and beautiful, and furthermore, if we went on asking silly questions, the rats that steal the faces of inquisitive children in order to wear them as masks would come to take us to live in the twilit world between the ceiling and the roof where no one ever dared to go."

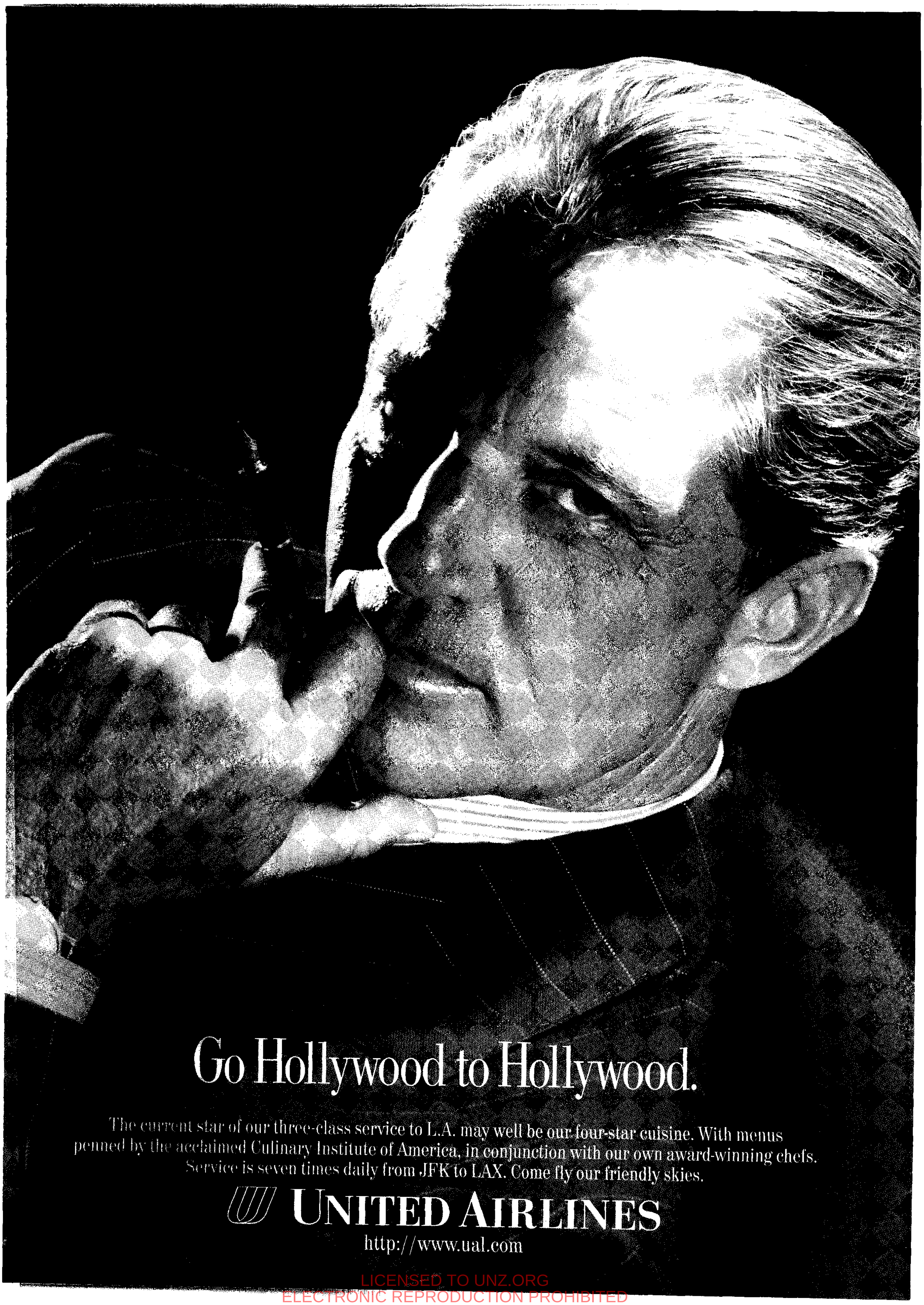
—Alastair Reid

WHO'S AFRAID OF BEOWULF?

Hearing the traces of Dr. David Howlett's flat Montana accent as he talks about his arcane researches in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, you are likely to take this donnish figure in tweed jacket and faded cords to be another transplant from the New World who has long been assimilated into the university's freemasonry.

Wrong. Although Howlett has been an Oxonian ever since 1966, when he arrived on campus as a Rhodes Scholar, he is a maverick who frequently antagonizes colleagues because of the scope and audacity of his scholarship on matters ranging from Biblical studies to Old French. Now he is about to publish a book, "British Books in Biblical Style," in which he claims to have identified the creator of "Beowulf," whose date of origin and authorship have been unknown, and he fully expects an uproar in the fuggy snug of Anglo-Saxon studies.

It is not just Howlett's findings that have proved nettlesome; it's the unseemly prodigiousness of his energies. By day, in the Bodleian, the fifty-two-year-old lexicographer edits the Dictionary of Medieval Latin, a monumental project that has taken him and other scholars thirty years to reach "L." At home, he often works until midnight on his own research, investigating a tradition in which writers, from the Hebrew Bible on, constructed elaborate linguistic patterns to imitate the mathematical order of the universe. His eureka moment with "Beowulf" and its monster-slaying hero occurred back in 1989, when he spotted what he thought might be the poet's signature: the name Aethelstan, cunningly reversed, in lines 887 and 888, which read, ". . . *he under harne stan / aethelinges bearn, ana geneoðe frecne daede.*" (Translation: ". . . he under the gray rock / alone performed the



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daring deed," or "Stan Aethel, son of Ing, alone performed the daring deed"—the deed being literary rather than martial.) This rang a Dark Ager's bell: the author of "Beowulf," Howlett subsequently concluded, must be the very Aethelstan who was chaplain in the ninth-century scholarly court of Alfred the Great.

If Howlett's theory holds up, the ramifications are exhilarating. "Beowulf" has been generally regarded as a barbaric overture to English literature, possibly written as early as the seventh century. In pinning "Beowulf" 's origins to the period ushered in by Alfred's defeat of the occupying Danes, Howlett situates the work at the beginning of a more self-conscious tradition in English poetry. Indeed, he sees the poem as a companion work to Alfred's translation of Boethius's "Consolation of Philosophy," and he believes that "Beowulf" was commissioned for the investiture of Alfred's young grandson, also called Aethelstan.

"I see 'Beowulf' as Boethius for babies, teaching the young king how to behave in a time of extreme danger," Howlett says. "It's a manual of court etiquette. There's surprisingly little fighting. But the establishment will resist the idea that the national epic was written for a little boy. Or that it's so ambitious, so carefully wrought. They want it to be all dragons and Brünnhilde."

Howlett's response to his own time of extreme danger is bemusement. He claims that critics of his work have gone so far as to insinuate that his books must have been written during office hours, and that they have tried to nail him by hacking into his E-mail. What they don't understand, he suggests, is the nature of his archeology. All those not-so-hidden puzzles in the hoary texts are, he says, "like sex: they need two to play."

THE PROUST EFFECT

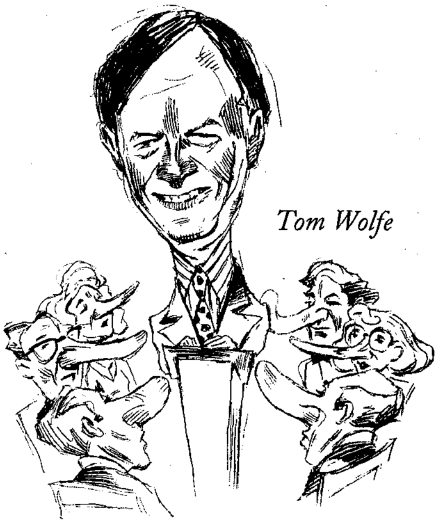
END-OF-THE-YEAR bashes are generally predictable affairs, but the annual dinner of the Olfactory Research Fund, a nonprofit organization devoted to "establishing the positive influence of fragrance on human behavior," was not. During a specially prepared "sensory" dinner, held recently in a lavender-scented dining room at the United Nations, the O.R.F., whose members include toiletry executives, beauty-magazine editors, and serious scientists, handed out awards to such recipients as J. C. Penney (for the chain store's "retail sense of smell") and Coty (for bringing "to the public's attention the important role of vanilla in enhancing the quality of life"). Then the after-dinner speaker, the writer Tom Wolfe, took the lectern, and for the next forty-five minutes the great gadfly revealed—more or less—what has been on his mind lately.

Wearing his usual white suit, a high-collared candy-striped shirt, and a polka-dot tie, Wolfe announced, "I'm going to bring you the most important news of the end of this century." As the diners lowered their coffee spoons, he hit them hard: "You must think of the names Darwin and Freud and Marx to get something comparable to the influence that the field of neuroscience is beginning to have in our world." (*Silence.*) "Neuroscience is the hottest topic in the academic world today. . . . And why? Well, one of the things they're studying is the sense of smell—the Proust effect. You'll remember—we've all read our Proust—that there's this great passage in which the aroma of madeleines, these little rich cakes that they love in France, evokes this torrent of memory in Proust. And, as we all know, there's no sense that reaches more deeply and suddenly into our emotional center—right into the solar plexus—than the sense of smell." (*Scattered nods of recognition.*) "And there is a new Darwin. His name is Edward O. Wilson, and his theory can be stated in one sentence: Every human brain is born an exposed negative waiting to be dipped into developer fluid." (*Fidgeting.*) "He's talking about genetic hard-wiring."

Wolfe raced on to the recent collapse of Marx and Freud; current P.C. battles over the gay gene, feminism, and experimental I.Q. testing ("Who wants to know that he is a permanently disabled mediocrity?"); and the rise of "brain imaging": "Ten years from now, we'll have pictures . . . of the brain at work which will be like those marvellous things you see at auto shows, where they have a cross-section of an internal-combustion engine." (*Idle rummaging in the party-favor bags for complimentary perfume samples.*)

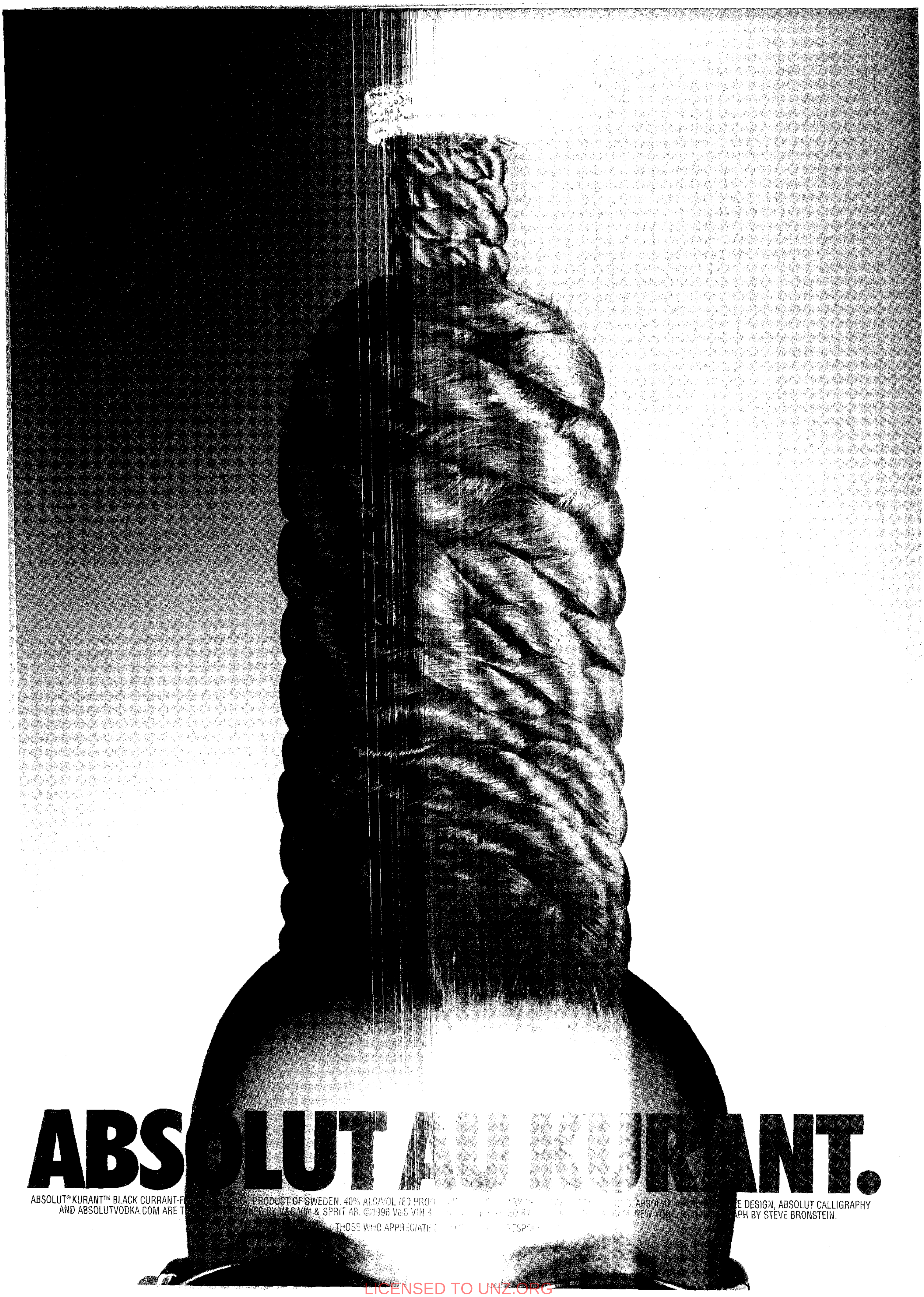
Which brought him to "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Neuroscience," the title of his talk: "Mr. Hyde was much smaller than Dr. Jekyll because he was new. . . . But as time went by he got bigger and bigger. And it was all neuroscience. It was kind of the ultimate Prozac that he'd found. He'd take the potion at night and become Mr. Hyde and go out and rape women and kill people. And he loved it! Loved every minute of it!" (*Distinct scraping of chairs.*)

On he sailed: through Descartes's "Cogito ergo sum," the Calvinist belief in predestination, and attention-deficit disorder, before arriving at Nietzsche's prediction—"made before he went insane" (*some relieved laughter*)—that science would destroy its own foundation. Scientific skepticism, Wolfe continued, had become so pervasive that a prominent geologist recently told him, "You know, when I started out in science we believed that what you did was lay down a layer of bricks through investigation and experiment, then you laid down another layer. We now realize that the very first layer of bricks was resting on a bubble." (*First tiptoeings out.*)


Tom Wolfe

Wolfe's voice dropped to a stage whisper: "Suddenly I had a picture in my mind of the whole fantastic modern edifice collapsing and man suddenly dropping—stricken!—into the primordial ooze, and he's there floundering around, and he's treading ooze and wondering what's going to become of himself. And suddenly something huge and smooth swims underneath him and boosts him up. He can't see it! He doesn't know what it is! But he's very much impressed. And he gives it a name: God." (*Timid applause. Inner-pocket coat-check fumbling.*) ♦

"An Exultation of Books," Simon Schama, Eric Scigliano; "Who's Afraid of Beowulf?," John Dugdale; "The Proust Effect," Jay Fielden.



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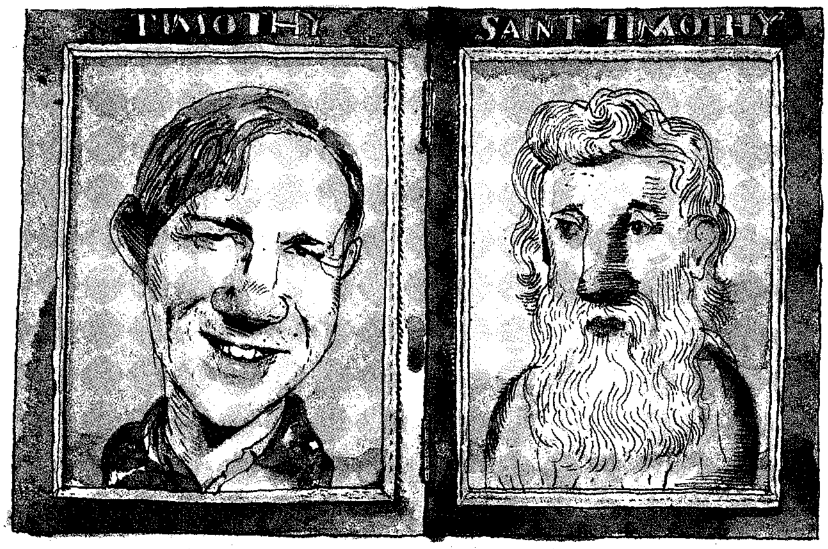
PERSONAL HISTORY

FIDELITY

Midlife crisis and the sanctity of St. Timothy.

BY TIM PARKS



BARRY BLITT

IN the brief time between my birth and baptism, my parents were obliged to vacate the old rectory where I was born. The walls were crumbling with dry rot. Given the urgency of the situation, the local authorities provided a council house in a working-class district of my father's parish, and, shortly after we arrived, the new neighbors dropped by. It was thus discovered that two other boys on the street had been born and baptized only the week before and that both had been called Timothy. This was irritating, since my parents had been planning to call me Timothy. The name means "honoring God." My mother did not want to be seen to be following fashion—particularly in a working-class district. Was there an actor called Timothy something or other? For a day or two, things hung in the balance, but in the end my father held firm and I was called Timothy. After the baptism, I was given a Bible, and I later found that my father had written for me, on the inside page, in his nervous, angular hand, the words " 'O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust.' I Timothy 6:20."

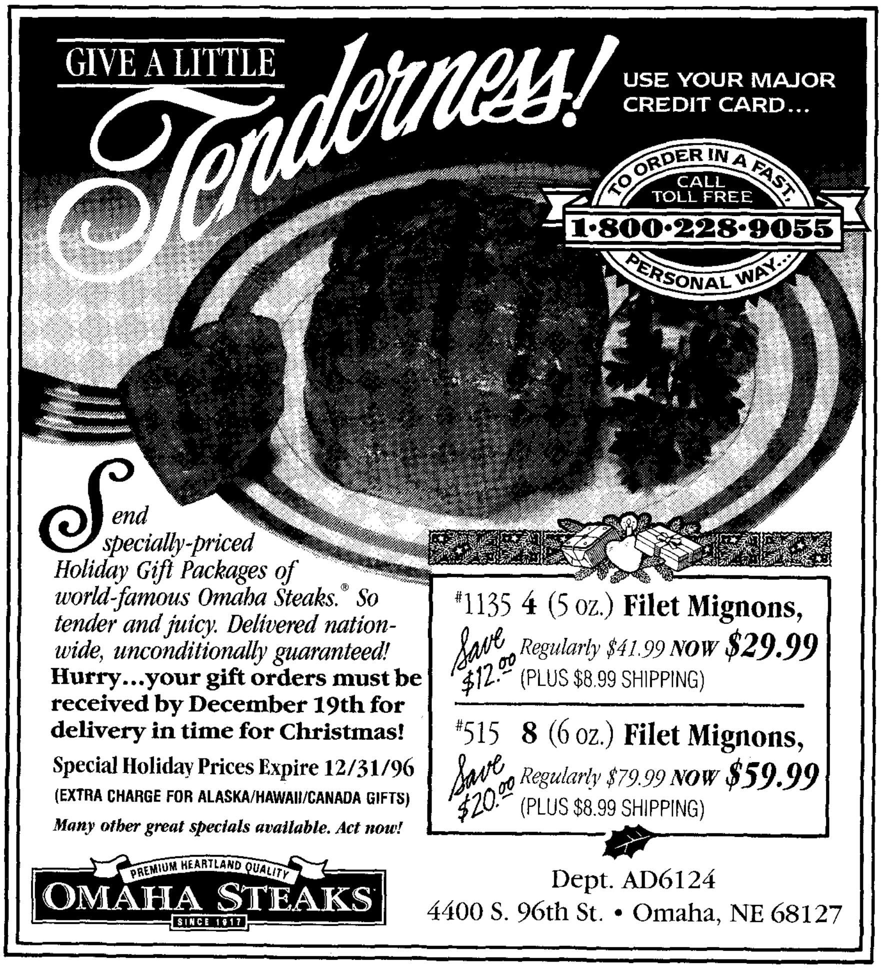
My parents, though Anglican, were evangelical in the extreme. They took their inspiration from the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles: "Go ye into all the world, and preach." It was inevitable that they would have missionary friends, and when I was ten or so a missionary family we knew well was martyred in Burundi. Seized in a rebel uprising, mother, father, and two young children were offered a choice between denying their faith and death. They chose death. We held a memorial service for them. And I remember asking my father then if Timothy had been a martyr. He didn't know. Not that my father was an ignorant man. Far from it. But since in the evangelical tradition it is supremely to the Bible that one refers, and since there is no mention in the Bible of Timothy's death, it was natural that my father did not know. It was only around my twenty-first birthday, as I was leafing through an Encyclopædia Britannica in a university library, that I finally came across the story: Timothy is reputed to have been martyred in Ephesus, where he was the first bishop. Nobody seized him or tortured him or insisted that he deny his faith. He went looking for trouble—and did so quite late in life. He tried to stop the ritual orgies with which the Ephesians celebrated the goddess Artemis, and was clubbed to death by a mob. It was after this discovery that I began to ask: Who was this Timothy?

What did my parents mean by giving me his name, ignorant though they were of his martyrdom?

TIMOTHY was among the first of those who came after. This is one's impression on reading the New Testament. Born a generation too late and six hundred kilometres to the northwest, in Asia Minor, he never knew Jesus, nor was he in Palestine during those forty days when the risen Christ showed himself to his disciples. Unlike Paul, Timothy was not granted the blinding light or the voice from the sky.

The first few chapters of the Acts of the Apostles are crammed with action. The Church explodes into being. And Timothy was almost there. How many times, when travelling with Paul as his missionary companion—both men wrapped in cloaks, looking out from the prow of some merchant ship crossing the choppy Aegean—would Timothy have heard tell of the early days: the three thousand converts that first morning of Pentecost; the demons being cast out; the lame being made to run; and that unique moment of communist Christianity when all the believers brought all that they possessed "and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

Listening to those stories—as the Church spread and grew, the towns came and went—Timothy must already have been aware that the miracles were happening a little less often now, and that, when they did, it was always Paul who performed them. Did he already appreciate that, when Paul had gone, there would be no more—that miracles and social revolution were not the order of every day? My father was a great admirer of Paul's. Indeed, I suspect that, as he went about his pastoral business in an Anglican Church whose complacent decay increasingly frustrated him, there was no one he admired more. He quoted from him constantly. Standing in the pulpit, his bald dome of a head glowing with excitement, robed arms upraised, he even looked like the figure of the apostle as shown in Bible storybooks—preaching to the skeptical Athenians, perhaps. It once occurred to me that he consciously imitated Paul. Yet he called me Timothy. Was Paul too ambitious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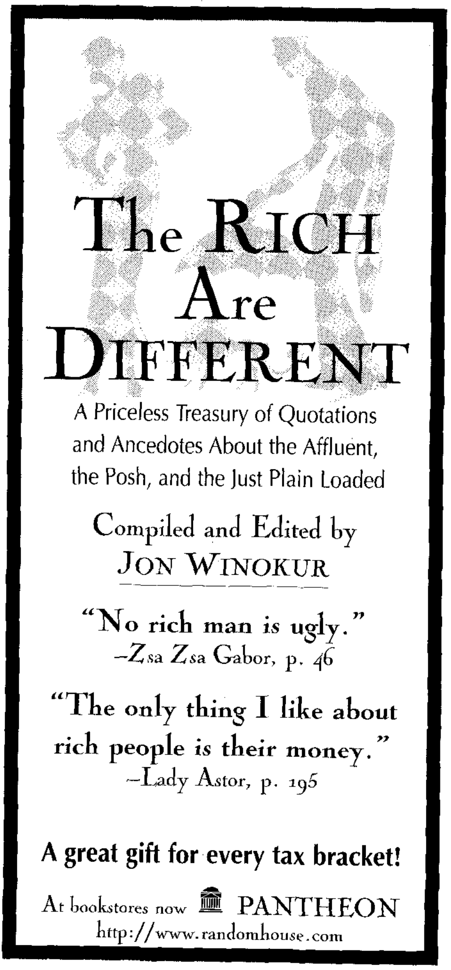
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a role model? Or was it that, since his family had prevented him from following a missionary vocation, my father found it difficult to associate his children with adventure?

Paul suffered from no such restraints. All too aware of the danger—what else had he looked for throughout his life?—he set off for Jerusalem, jail, the journey to Rome, and death. Paul was ever in the vanguard. But, rather in the way that some dashing entrepreneurs set up a company and then bring in a manager to keep it going, he would send his closest disciples to watch over the churches he had formed. Thus Timothy was left in charge of Ephesus, one of the largest ports of the Mediterranean, bustling center of trade and vice, Light of Asia, Highway of Martyrs, home, above all, of the great Temple of Artemis, with its image of the goddess that fell from the sky.

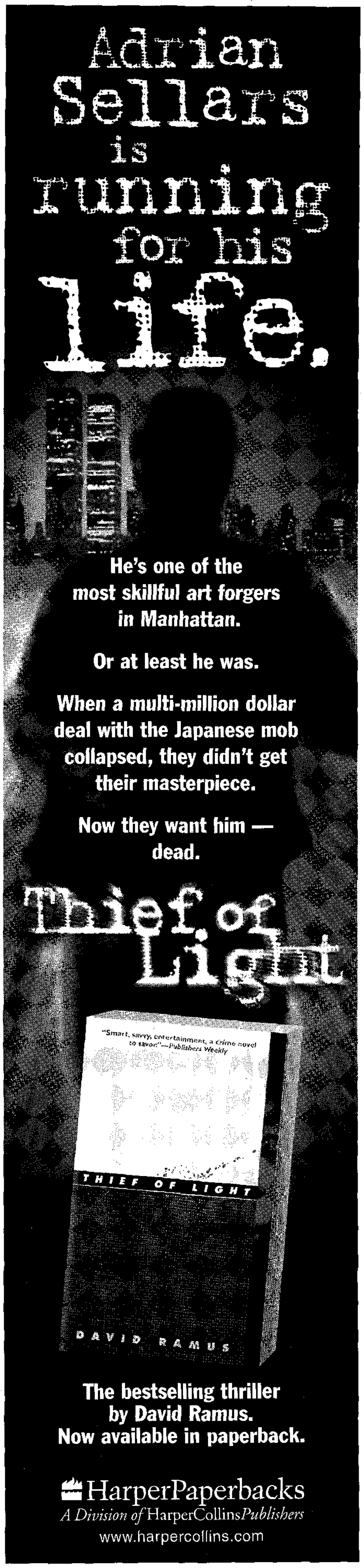
Was Timothy up to it? He was young still, and his health was poor. Ephesus was a difficult place. Insisting on monogamy, the Christians had obliged converts to leave all but one wife. There were "widows" who had to be looked after. And should Jewish Christians obey the old Jewish laws or not? Should a Christian slave obey a pagan master? Of course, these were minor questions beside the revelation of Christ's deity. Soon the Second Coming would put an end to such trivia. But in the meantime, disconcertingly, these matters had to be dealt with.

Paul wrote letters to Timothy to give him a hand. Keep the faith. A little wine with your meals is good for the constitution. Deacons, however, should not be heavy drinkers. Bishops should not be profligate. Behave. Let the women learn in silence. Don't take widows under threescore years into full-time church service. They may wax wanton. Reading this sensible advice, Timothy could hardly have failed to recognize that the headier days were definitely over. One even had to be a little cautious in one's evangelism now. "Lay hands suddenly on no man," Paul tells him. And, in general, beware. The latter days will be hard.

The latter days: Timothy stands in relation to Paul as the married man to the lover. He is in for the long haul. His sanctity is a work of unceasing maintenance, a coming to terms with routine. Don't betray the promise of your youth, writes Paul. I give thee charge that thou keep this commandment until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Until the Second Coming. But when would that be? Timothy had married young—indeed, was possibly the youngest convert of early evangelism. He and his bride, the Church, were to be together a long time. And while Paul wrote at length of deacons and bishops and widows' societies and wages, did Timothy begin to appreciate that he might be merely the first of a thousand links in a chain set to stretch across millennia to come—that Christ's triumphant return might be indefinitely delayed? Did he become anxious that he would not be able to keep the faith? Keep thy charge, writes Paul—soon to be martyred in Rome.

MY father preached every Sunday. I know it became a burden for him to think of new things to say, to maintain the enthusiasm that had caused one local paper to refer to him as "our fiery northern vicar." Was he becoming anxious about this when I was born? He had just turned thirty-four. First intimations of midlife crisis? Was this what was on his mind when he chose my name? Was he warning me about what he himself most feared? How difficult it is to preserve the passion in the liturgy (as likewise romantic love in marriage). After all, I was the third child, and the last: it was the moment, as any analyst will tell you, when a man senses that the die is truly cast. "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust." Certainly it is in Paul's Pastoral Epistles that one feels most keenly the shift from revelation to orthodoxy. History is turning out to be longer than expected. With time on their hands, men will be idle, they will talk, they will have new ideas, they will change and subvert things. The whole verse reads, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called."

How to preserve the faith through the latter days? In the space of the few pages addressed to Timothy, Paul uses the word "doctrine" thirteen times, more than in any other book of the Bible. And his prose is constantly con-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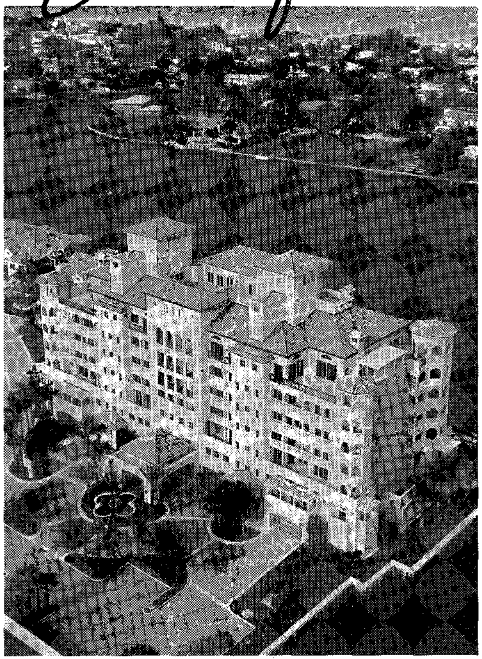

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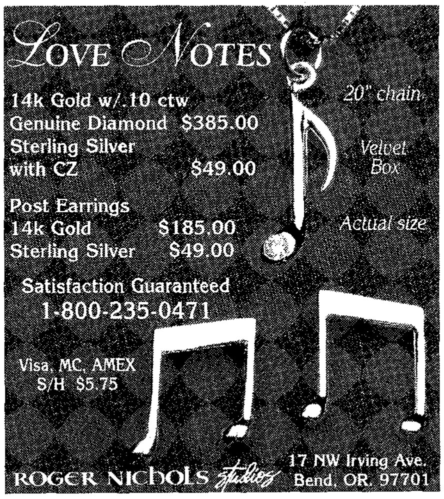

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gealing into creed. Sometimes it is almost a chant: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." If time was to be long, then it must be frozen in "sound doctrine." Timothy's sanctity would be to achieve that, to turn passion into ritual. My father, I remember, was pale with anger when the Anglican Church finally gave up the use of its traditional 1662 prayer book. He knew the importance of the oft-repeated formula.

But what if, with orthodoxy successfully established—and half the kids on the street called Timothy—persecution and all its intoxicating emotions were not inevitable? What if the routine of the latter days began to pall?

IT must have been in the late sixties that the tedium finally got to my father. The children were almost grown up, the world was in upheaval, and he was still there keeping a charge that never changed. He was forty-six now. Faithful to his doctrine, unwilling to deny what he had always preached, he had the good fortune to find a new excitement within Scripture itself. Much in the way that some people in middle life seek bizarre sexual stimulants with their aging partners, my father discovered the charismatic gifts of the first letter to the Corinthians—tongues, prophesy, healing, exorcism. An American evangelist had come to town. We were in London now. There was a movement, feverish meetings in suburban parks. My father was "baptized in the Holy Spirit." My mother followed, then the curate. They spoke in tongues. The congregation went out to preach on the street. There were many converts. And finally a demon was found, too (as seems inevitable in movements of this kind). Why would a seventeen-year-old smoke dope and play wild music if he wasn't possessed? Why was his hair so long, his beard so goaty? Was it possible that his leg, lame from polio, could be healed? My brother laughed at them and hissed, pretending to be demonic. He enjoyed their outrage. Why would anybody, my mother asked, give up a possible career in engineering to study at art college? My brother drank heavily at parties and argued vociferously in favor of the Vietcong. It was 1968. Jimi Hendrix was a genius. But the boy's lame leg, somebody said, could be a sign of Satan. And then, on Christmas Day, my brother locked himself in his room with a girl dressed in secondhand clothes and didn't come downstairs for his turkey and ginger beer. Why would anybody do such a thing if he was not possessed? The world must change, and must be seen to change, as it had for the apostles. Otherwise, what were the gifts for? And so, at last, there was an exorcism. There was constraint and violence and wild words, and the world did change: like the old rectory in Manchester where I was born, our family split apart like a rotten timber.

During that period of charismatic folly—so exciting and so destructive—this fourteen-year-old Timothy went out with parties of young Christians and picketed places of vice. Our youth club burned the records of a group called Black Sabbath, and in the evening we went to Soho and sang hymns outside strip joints and porno cinemas. We called our outings "Soul-Searching Parties." The curate came along, and someone with a guitar, and we stood in drizzle under yellow lamplight asking people who smelled of drink if they were saved and encouraging them to think of the Odeon as evil. Amazingly, some listened. Most laughed. A few spat. But, had we searched our own souls, what would we have found to explain our extraordinary behavior? Were we moved by love of sinners? Or was it just an ordinary eagerness for excitement and action, the way others went looking for fights outside soccer stadiums?

Thirty years after Paul went to his glorious death, Timothy was still holding the fort in Ephesus. He was old now, and the Church the established thing that Paul had so fervently wished. Timothy had kept the faith, assured an orthodoxy. But on January 24th in the year 97, or so the fourth-century historian Eusebius tells us, Timothy had had enough. He went out to picket the huge Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, where the Ephesians were enjoying their licentious festivities in honor of the goddess. As the old saint stood there, definitely looking for trouble, did he intone, as we once did on the Charing Cross Road, the creed that his religion had now become? Did he hurl one cosmology into the teeth of the other to make something happen at last? Or was he thinking wistfully of the youthful lusts that Paul had advised him to flee? Insulted, quite probably inebriated, the pagan Ephesians clubbed him to death.

Called out of this world, the Christian is given the mission of getting the world straight before it is too late, not of loving it for what it is. Thus all Christian sanctity tends toward apocalypse, until, frustrated, it settles for immolation. Even for those of us who do not believe (myself now among them), this state of mind is not incomprehensible. We have all had our passions and epiphanies, the intensities we have tried to cling to. We can recognize the saint's peculiar heroism, the seduction of his folly: to hold a faith rigid across the decades, and then, when weary, to find some way of dying for it. We can see that, hear its siren call, or, in my own case, the sound of voices shrieking from behind a vestry door. Among my father's regrets must surely have been that martyrdom had not mercifully saved him from his great mistake.

TWO years ago, I went to the British Museum to see some fragments of the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, fragments of stone against which my namesake's head might feasibly have been bashed. They were not on display. And the Epistles to Timothy, the experts now tell us, were not written by St. Paul. At most, there are a few snatches from the apostle himself, plagiarized to give authority to some much later text, written by someone still hammering at the gong of orthodoxy way into the second century. Thus Timothy remains the figure of he who—admonished, exhorted, encouraged—grapples with fading memories, vigorous enemies, fainthearted friends. And who could be more saintly than that? "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus," says one of the last fragments that everybody agrees a historical Paul addressed to a historical Timothy, "when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." Whatever his other problems, Timothy, apparently, was the kind of person who could be relied upon to perform such a humble charge—a model of fidelity. It may have taken forty-one years and the birth of three children, but I begin to appreciate the burden of the name my father gave me. ♦

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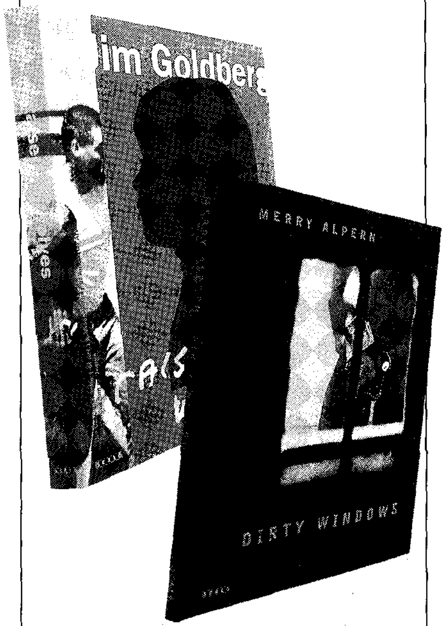

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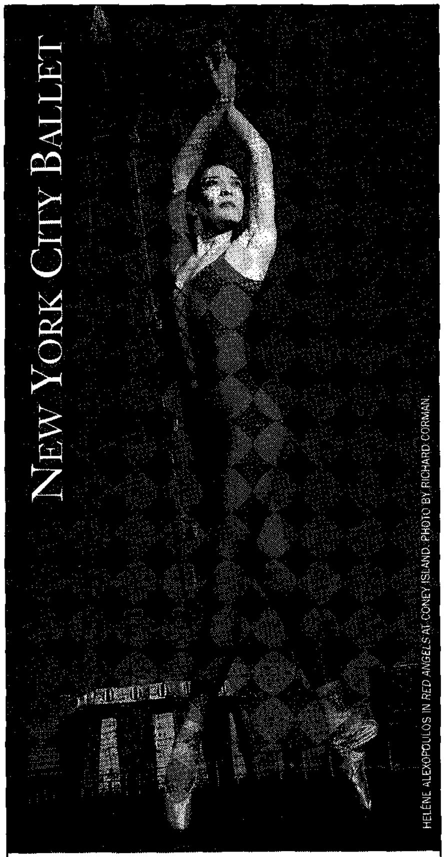
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PROFILE

BECOMING JAPANESE

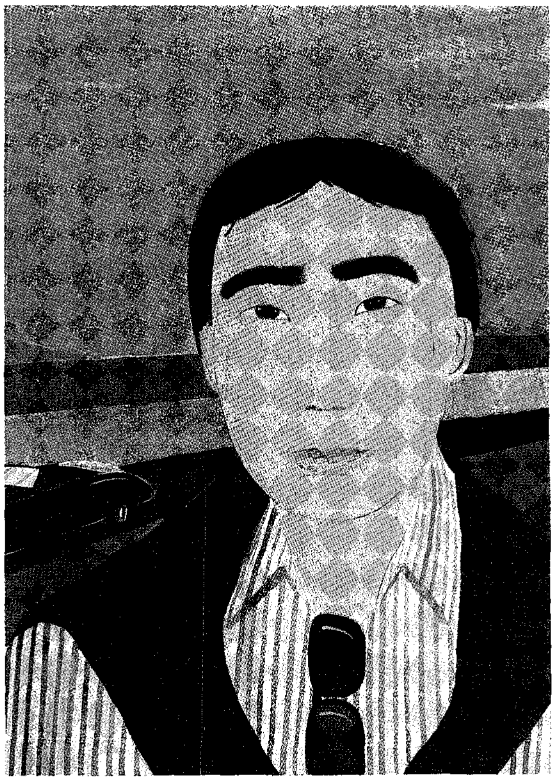
Haruki Murakami was said to be Tokyo's Bret Easton Ellis—loved by the kids, hated by the grownups. And then he had a revelation.

BY IAN BURUMA

HARUKI MURAKAMI is a Japanese writer. Of his generation, which emerged in the late seventies, he is the most famous, and perhaps the most important, Japanese writer. Yet there is something curious about his work: the almost complete absence of references to Japanese culture. Murakami's characters eat steaks, pizzas, or pasta. They listen to Ella Fitzgerald or Rossini. They wear sharp suits ("A George Peppard number") and stylish shirts ("a lighter shade of blue, Oxford broadcloth, regular collar"). They whistle "Danny Boy" while stuck in an elevator, and are reminded of Curt Jurgens on a U-boat when they lay their heads on their girlfriends' tummies. The title of Murakami's biggest best-seller (which has sold more than two million copies), "Norwegian Wood," refers to the Beatles song.

There is a word for this kind of thing in Japanese, and it is *batakusai*—literally, "stinking of butter." The Japanese, like the Chinese, didn't eat milk products, so to them all Westerners smelled milky, or buttery, or cheesy. And so did Japanese who adopted Western styles too self-consciously. Turn-of-the-century novelists, dressed like Parisian bohemians and dreaming of Baudelaire while describing their amorous adventures in Tokyo brothels, smelled of butter. Murakami's style often reeks of butter. That is part of his appeal. Young Japanese like the coolness of his prose. They like his detachment and irony.

Murakami is cool. His clothes—jogging shoes, T-shirt, sunglasses—are cool. His manners are cool: a quiet courtesy employed to keep a distance. The most animated features of his otherwise cool face are thick eyebrows that twitch occasionally, like cat's ears, above a pair of large, watchful, feline eyes. His car—an Alfa Romeo convertible; left-hand drive, Continental European style—is very cool. Living abroad, as Murakami did, for almost ten years, in Europe and the United States, is cool. At the height of his celebrity in Japan, in the late eighties, Murakami was so cool that style journalists couldn't resist comparisons: Murakami was the Japanese Jay McInerney, the Japanese Bret Easton Ellis.


Haruki Murakami: "Revelation is not really a Japanese concept."

GEOFFREY PARKER

But to see Murakami merely as a fashionable mimic of Western pop styles would be a simplification. In fact, his most ambitious and important book to date, “The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle” (to be published by Knopf in 1997), is deeply concerned with a modern Japanese agony. It begins in true Murakami fashion: “I was cooking spaghetti in the kitchen when the phone rang. The spaghetti was nearly done. The radio was tuned to an FM station. I was whistling to the overture to Rossini’s ‘La Gazza Ladra,’ which has to be the perfect music for cooking pasta.” But from there on the reader is sucked into a Japanese nightmare. The characters are linked through a painful and rarely discussed event in recent Japanese history: the massacre of Japanese troops in 1939 by Soviet tanks on a patch of Mongolian desert called Nomonhan. The useless offensive was launched by the Japanese, and was an example of its military’s utter irrationality: Japanese officers were confident of victory because they believed that a fanatical spirit and the emperor’s blessing were enough to defeat the Soviets. “I take war very seriously,” Murakami told me, when I met him in Japan last October. “It stretches the tension between individuals and the state to the very limit.”

The same tension is there in Murakami’s previous novels, but in a less political, more solipsistic manner. The violence of wartime Manchuria in “The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle” seems far removed from the author’s earlier preoccupations with Western fashions and young life styles. Murakami claims that he couldn’t have written the novel if he hadn’t lived in the United States. (While he was working on this material, he heard the news that the followers of a bizarre guru named Shoko Asahara had committed mass murder in the Tokyo subway. That crime will be the subject of Murakami’s next work, his first book of nonfiction.) It’s as though Murakami had to leave Japan to find his way back home.

The course of this literary journey is worth tracing, for Murakami’s loop from escape to return is typical of the lives of many modern Japanese artists and writers. In the past, when Japanese rediscovered their Japaneseness, they often became conservative, even chauvinistic, in a rather theatrical way, as if to atone for their youthful Europhilia. They dressed in kimonos and refused to go abroad again. Occasionally, a writer or an artist would switch from one extreme to the other and then back again. The painter Fujita, for example, started off as a bohemian modernist in Paris in the nineteen-tens and twenties, and then returned to be a war propagandist in Japan, only to go back to Paris after the war, via New York, and end up as a Roman Catholic and a French citizen.

Murakami’s rediscovery of Japan’s history took a supernatural turn when he visited Nomonhan, in 1994; he had a revelation, which he claims changed his life. “I felt as though I had experienced the battle myself,” he said. “I wondered what I would have done if I had been a Japanese living in 1939.” There, in that arid Mongolian borderland, he felt that he could no longer escape from something he had always feared: the capacity for irrational violence in Japanese society. He told me this on a Sunday evening, at a sushi restaurant in Oiso, a beach resort near Tokyo, where he has a weekend place. Earlier that day, he had spoken about another revelation, which started his career as a writer. Between these two revelations, one in Tokyo, the other in Nomonhan sixteen years later, lies the remarkable story of a writer who dreamed of abroad and rediscovered his country.

MURAKAMI can remember the precise physical sensation of the moment when he knew that he would be a writer: an early-spring afternoon in Tokyo, warm sunshine, a slight breeze, the smell of fried cuttlefish, and the sound of chanting baseball fans. It was April of 1978, and Murakami was twenty-nine years old. He was up in the bleachers of Jingu Stadium, watching a game between the Yakult Swallows and the Hiroshima Carp. Dave Hilton, an American, was batting first, in his first season in Japan. He hit a double. In that instant, Murakami realized that he could write a novel. He still doesn’t know why; he just knew.

At the time, he was running a jazz bar in Tokyo with his wife, Yoko. The bar was called Peter Cat. Every night, after closing time, Murakami would spend an hour or two writing at his kitchen table. The novel, which he began writing in English, was called “Hear

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the Wind Sing." It has nothing to do with baseball. The title refers to a line from a short story by Truman Capote, one of Murakami's favorite authors. The novel is about three young people—two boys and a girl—hanging out near Kobe. There are references to Creedence Clearwater Revival, Ray Bradbury, and Nietzsche. The main character has an affair with a former schoolmate, who has tracked him down by dedicating a Beach Boys song to him on the radio. All the while, he is haunted by the suicide of a former girlfriend. Something of the peculiar quality of the novel, which switches back and forth between teen-age anomie and flat, quasi-philosophical asides about life and death, is captured in the following passage:

> I shall talk about my third girlfriend. It's hard talking about someone who died. It's even harder talking about a girl who died young. Because she died, she'll be young forever, while I, who survived, get older every year, every month, every day. Sometimes I feel myself getting older by the hour. And that's the terrifying truth.

It is common in Japan for first-time authors to present their unpublished manuscripts for awards. In 1979, Murakami submitted his novel for the Gunzo prize. When it was shortlisted, he had no doubt that it would win. It did, and went on to sell more than a hundred and fifty thousand copies in hardback.

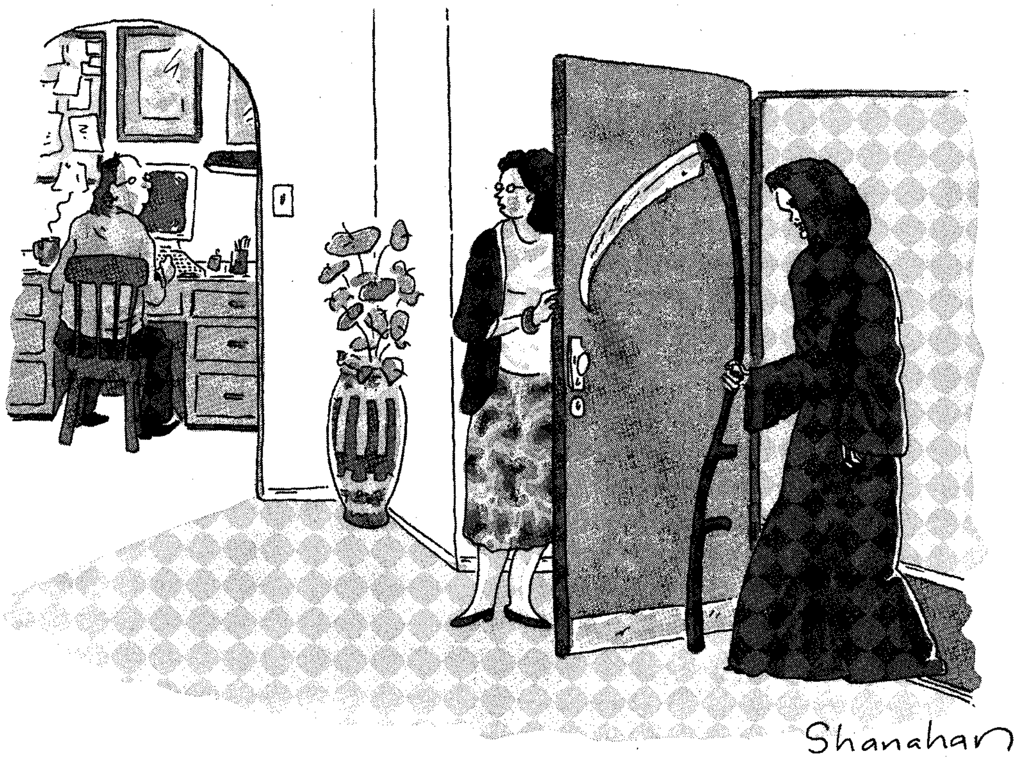
We were sitting in Murakami's Oiso apartment. It was decorated sparsely, with handcrafted wooden furniture and modern ceramics. Jazz records (Ella Fitzgerald, Art Blakey, Miles Davis) were neatly stacked in the living room. The atmosphere was clean, woody, a bit Scandinavian. Surfers were trying to ride the late-autumn waves at the beach. There was an air about them of earnest endeavor rather than of youthful exuberance. After a long silence, Murakami said, "Yes, it is strange, isn't it. Baseball is an American game. Hilton was an American batter. The kind of revelation I experienced that day was not very Japanese. Revelation is not really a Japanese concept."

Murakami's fascination with the West, with American metaphors and references, started early. He grew up as the only child of a high-school teacher in an unremarkable modern suburb near Kobe. There was nothing traditional about his childhood except the conformism of Japanese society, which he hated: the school uniforms, the petty rules, the group-mindedness, the submission of individual desires to collective, familial duties. His escape from this social claustrophobia was to dream of America. In his words, he "tried to create a foreign country in my heart." He bought American paperbacks at a secondhand bookshop frequented by United States Navy sailors. He listened to American music on FM radio. It was a way to be free—if not socially, then at least spiritually. "Learning another language is like becoming another person," he told me. The desire to creep into another person's skin is also what made him a keen translator of, among others, Raymond Carver and Grace Paley.

Murakami used the term "virtual reality" to describe his fantasy of America: "I liked making up this reality inside myself. It was easy for me, since I was an only child."

Thirty years ago, the young loner, living in his virtual reality of America, looking for freedom in the novels of Raymond Chandler, might have seemed eccentric to his parents and peers in Kobe. Murakami says he never shared his interests with friends. He hardly talked to anyone at school. But there are literary precedents of sorts. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Japanese novelists, reacting against the cynical fatalism of traditional popular fiction (which often dealt with the tragedies of courtesans and rakes who broke the rules of Japanese society—by falling in love, say), turned to European literature, and even Christianity, to express their yearning for freedom. Then, as now, Japanese associated Western culture with "dry" individualism, whereas the East was "wet"—warm, emotional, irrational, and claustrophobic. Just as Murakami refers to Rossini and F. Scott Fitzgerald in his novels, such writers as Ryunosuke Akutagawa (1892-1927) referred to Strindberg and Anatole France. These names would be dropped in the text, like a grand guest list. But they also had the mythical ring that American rock-and-roll song titles would have for later generations: they contained the promise of liberation.

This, for instance, is a sentence in a Murakami story entitled "On Seeing the 100% Perfect Girl One Beautiful April Morning": "When they awoke,



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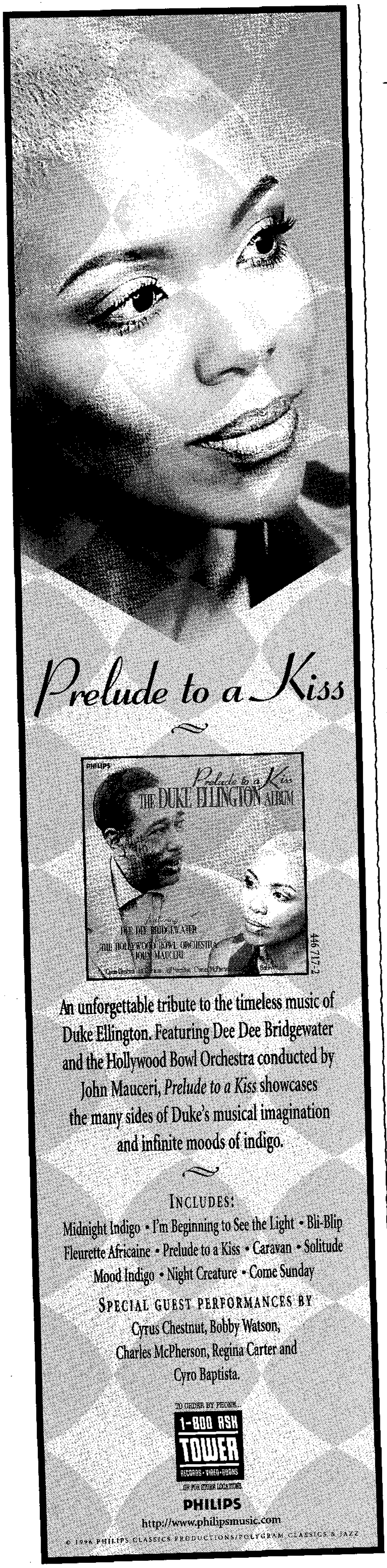

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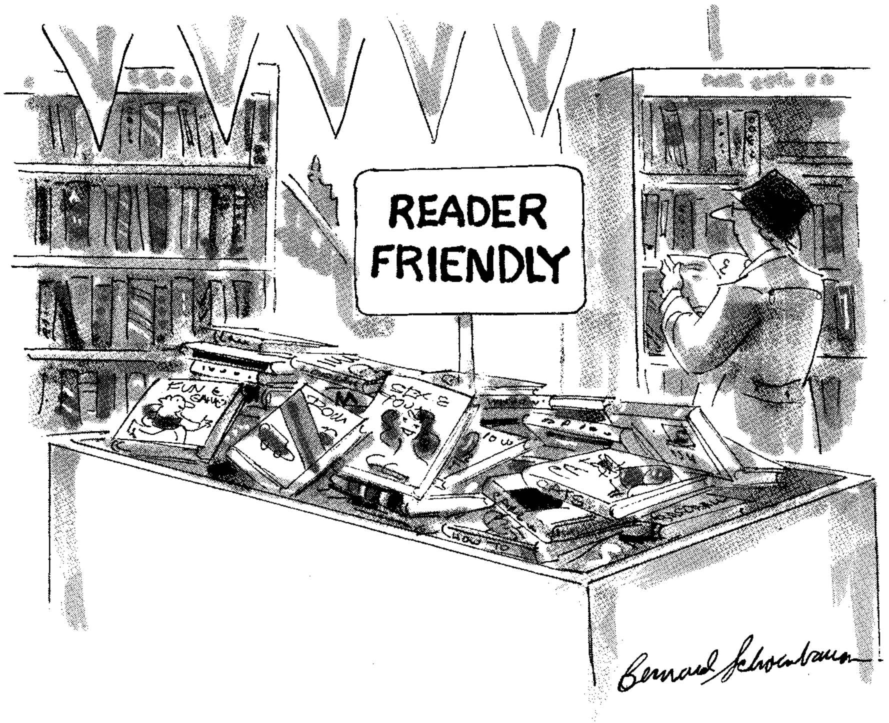

their heads were as empty as the young D. H. Lawrence's piggy bank." In "A Wild Sheep Chase," a "heavy middle-aged lady was training her gaze at a distant point in space outside, like a critic listening to a Scriabin sonata." I asked Murakami why he was so fond of such references. The question made him a bit defensive. He no longer used them so much, he said. He used to be more interested in life styles, in brand names. These titles and names are cultural brand names, he said. They are props. Characters are defined by the choices they make, in books or music. Some American writers—Bret Easton Ellis, say—use the same device. But the props in Murakami's fiction are not just consumer symbols. They are part of a conscious effort to expunge Japanese tradition. He devised a narrative style entirely new to Japan: a mixture of science fiction, hardboiled cool, and metaphysics—Arthur C. Clarke tipping his hat to Nietzsche in Japanese.

"Norwegian Wood," about the fumbling love affairs of a young student, is Murakami's most realistic novel. The student lives in a dormitory: "The rooms stank, too, since everyone just threw their dirty clothes under the beds. And no one even aired their bedding, so all of it reeked of sweat and body odor." He has a friend who commits suicide, which is described in the sparest prose: "That night he died in his garage. He attached a rubber hose to the exhaust pipe of his N360, got inside, sealed the windows with tape, and started the engine. I don't know how long it took him to die." In fact, this flat realism forms the backdrop of a metaphysical world, in which Murakami explores his version of the Orpheus myth.

The student, whose name is barely mentioned in the story (he is always "I"), realizes after his friend's suicide that "death is not the opposite of life, but a part of it. . . . Death is already inside me. And I couldn't shake that thought. I was enveloped in that same death that took my seventeen-year-old friend on that May evening." Later, his first girlfriend, Naoko, commits suicide, too. Like Orpheus, he is in a world of the dead; his only escape is provided by yet another girl, Midori.

Unlike the characters in most Japanese novels or movies, who represent either the glutinous intimacy of Japanese social life or the morbid alienation of the artist, the characters in a Murakami story are detached, ironic, unbothered by the obligations of Japanese society. When they communicate, it is often through dreams, or on the Internet. They live in a narrow world of their own, disconnected from politics and family life. Theirs is the individualism of MTV clips, the Walkman, and telephone sex. Many Japanese above the age of forty-five find Murakami's work frivolous and lacking in social or political content. Younger people—not just in Japan but in South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong—love it, perhaps precisely for those reasons. His books express an experience that urban East Asians recognize: a general breaking away from family dependence, and the often lonely, fragmentary attempts of young people to choose their own way of living.

WHEN I lived in Japan, during the nineteen-seventies, there was a strong current of nativism about. Political protests had died down. The nationwide demonstrations in 1960 against a security treaty with the United States had ended in failure. Artists and intellectuals became disillusioned with politics, but the resentments had not disappeared. The disaffection with politics had turned into a peculiar cultural romanticism, an infatuation with irrational, erotic Japanese subculture. The word for it was *dochaku*—literally, "from the soil." It was deliberately provincial, and deeply emotional. Playwrights and writers attacked the stuffy didacticism of European-style high culture by being outrageous, and even obscene, adopting the styles of fairground entertainers, gangsters, or peasant outlaws. A strong regional accent was prized as a genuine expression of the native soil. Theatre groups often acted like yakuza gangs.

As a complete outsider, I found this flirtation with local low life endlessly fascinating. I got involved with a theatre group, whose plays, written and directed by a swaggering, bosslike figure called Juro Kara, were a mixture of satire, Grand Guignol, and primitive Kabuki. We moved around Japan like a band of gypsies. The parties went on all night, the fights were monumental, and the emotions onstage and off were soaked in melodrama. Kara was easily moved to tears by sentimental Japanese ballads, and as easily provoked to defend the honor of his group by smashing sake bottles over the heads of hostile outsiders. Underneath the burlesque was a longing for Japaneseness, a "wet" tribal identity to combat the uniformity of an Americanized, industrialized, rationalized society. I understood this, and could sympathize to some extent, but could never be more than a cultural voyeur.

Murakami's cool, dry fictional world is the antithesis of this tribal Japaneseness. He abhors nativism. He got rid of his regional accent as soon as he came to Tokyo. The very idea of him shedding tears over a Japanese ballad or smashing bottles over people's heads is unthinkable. He told me that he couldn't write about his native roots, because he had grown up in a modern suburb, which could have been anywhere. "I must find my own story," he said. "I must go into myself. I can't express roots, and I don't want to write about families. I don't like families. Maybe that is because we can't have children. I don't have roots, but, like most people, I have traumas. I can't explain

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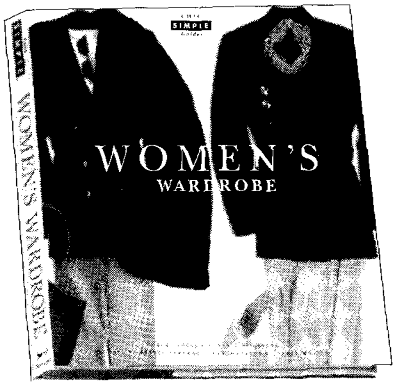

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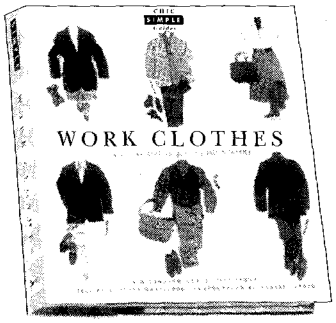

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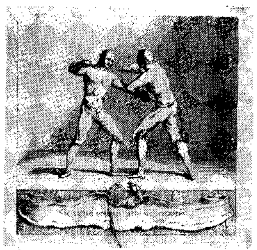

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them, but that is why I write stories."

Murakami lost all faith in collective action in the early seventies, at Waseda University, in Tokyo, where he studied scriptwriting and Greek drama. Like Berkeley or Columbia, Waseda had a radical reputation, but, while Murakami was there, the radicalism turned rancid. Maoist and Leninist factions fought over arcane interpretations of the revolutionary canon in vendettas of extraordinary violence. Members of one faction would be ambushed by members of another and clubbed to death with lead pipes. At the opposite extreme were the Japanese remnants of the Woodstock generation: tie-dyed dreamers of love and peace, fingering their beads, lighting sweet incense, murmuring Zen koans imported from California, and pretending to turn on (dope was scarce) and drop out before taking up lifetime employment in some safe corporation.

Murakami hated all of it. He felt "emotionally frozen" by the violent radicalism as well as by the chants of love and peace. And he felt betrayed: betrayed by Japanese society for imposing corporate conformity, and by the students who played at idealism before abjectly conforming. Perhaps what his generation of baby boomers felt above all was the betrayal of the democratic ideals they had been fed in high school, by teachers of Murakami's father's generation, who had lost the imperialist ideals they had been taught to die for. In "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle," two veterans of the Nomonhan battle try to relate their experiences to a young couple, but all they manage to convey is their spiritual hollowness and disillusion. "Living like an empty shell is not really living, no matter how many years it may go on," one of the old soldiers says. "The heart and flesh of an empty shell give birth to nothing more than the life of an empty shell."

So Murakami withdrew. He withdrew into his own head, with its virtual reality of abroad, stocked at that point with Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., and Richard Brautigan. He withdrew into a student marriage with Yoko, a strong, ascetic-looking woman: lithe, spare, angular, like a doe.

Now Murakami hardly moves without her. He constantly refers to her, saying that she knows more about him than he does himself. Yoko is the woman in

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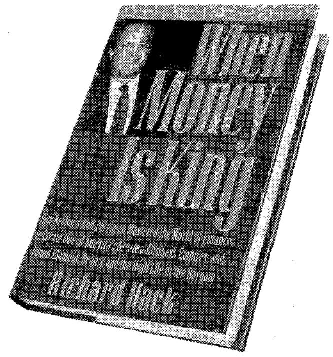

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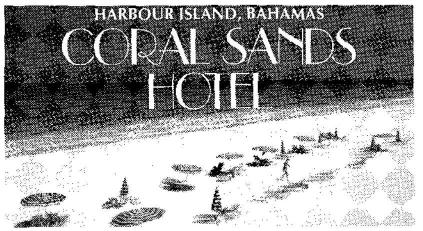

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his novels who redeems her man from the underworld. She is like Midori in "Norwegian Wood." "I want nothing in this world but you," the student says, at the end of the book, talking to her from a phone booth. The student has literally lost his sense of place. There is only Midori. But his love for Midori, one feels, does not connect the lovers to the society around them. They have to create their own place, in the middle of nowhere. Similarly, Murakami withdrew with Yoko into their jazz bar.

Eizo Matsumura, a photographer who has known Murakami for many years but maintains that he doesn't really know him at all, described Peter Cat to me as "a place where time had stood still." It was a windowless underground space. During the day, it was a coffee bar, and at night alcohol was served. There, in the dim light, Murakami played jazz records, prepared drinks, washed dishes, and read American novels. Yoko did most of the talking. Murakami is convinced that if it hadn't been for those years in the bar he would never have become a novelist. Until that day at the baseball game, he had never written a line, but he had had time to observe and to brood, and he believes that "the hard physical work gave me a moral backbone."

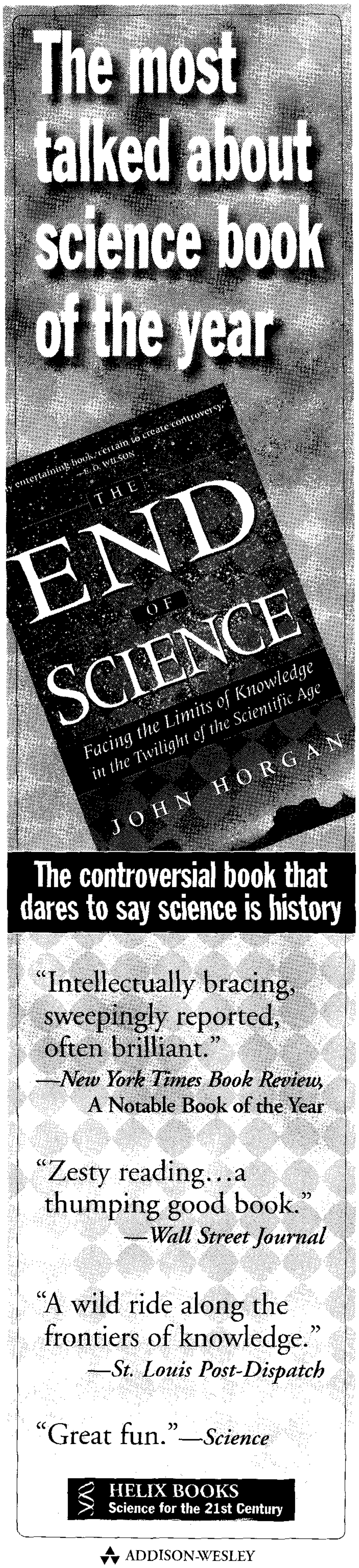
Murakami was always fascinated by the underground. In "Norwegian Wood," memories of the girlfriend who committed suicide are linked in the narrator's mind to the image of a well. The hero of "A Wild Sheep Chase" encounters a mysterious Sheep Man in a farmhouse in Hokkaido, which suddenly turns into a kind of well. In "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle," a soldier is left to die in a well at Nomonhan, and a young man in Tokyo drops down a well to confront his own mortality. The well, of course, is a common literary image. It is a retreat into the self; it is also a retreat into the world of memory, of the past, and of death.

THE success of Murakami's first two novels enabled him to give up the jazz bar in 1981, and emerge into the light. But literary success, especially in Japan, has its peculiar dangers, and these helped to drive Murakami abroad. The main danger is overproduction. Many a gifted Japanese writer has been wrecked by pressures to be in the magazines, on television, or otherwise in the public eye. Literary life can become a ghastly treadmill, kept going by personal and financial obligations, and the spectre of oblivion: stop running, the editors and publicity agents and TV producers whisper, and you will be forgotten tomorrow.

This is true to some extent in the United States as well. But Japanese writers have special problems, having to do with that wet, sticky quality of Japanese society which Murakami deplores. Japanese writers don't sign contracts with their publishers, nor do they receive advances. There are no literary agents. (Murakami now has one in New York.) It is considered bad form to negotiate about fees. Everything is based on personal relationships and long-standing agreements. Social harmony is the ideal. This might seem warm and human, compared with the dry, businesslike rationalism of the United States, but the result is a mixture of corporate pressure and a childlike dependence of authors on their publishers. Like much else in Japan, publishing is dominated by a few giant corporations. And most of the magazines are published by the same companies that produce the books.

Murakami deals with dozens of editors, all of whom demand a piece of him: magazine articles, interviews, dialogues with other celebrities which can be turned into instant books, and so on. He explained to me how it works: "Editors represent the publishing companies, but they come to you as friends. If you say no to them, they lose face, and feel hurt. They think I'm arrogant and insensitive, and this makes life very hard for me in Japan. If you wish to please the editors, you will be liked and Japanese harmony will prevail, but your work will suffer. As a result, I'm an outcast in the Tokyo literary world."

This is an exaggeration. If Murakami is disconnected socially from the literary scene, it is because he chooses to be. But the wetness of which he complains is real. I had lunch with several editors of Kodansha, one of the giant corporations that publish Murakami's books. Opinions on Murakami's novels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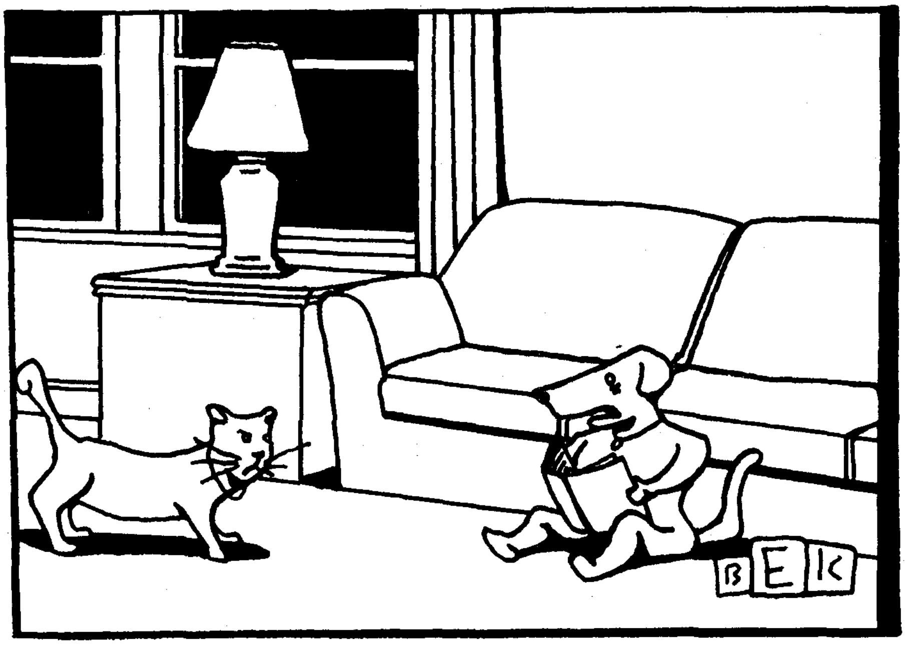
were mixed. The oldest editor present found his imaginary world too narrow, too detached from reality. Others thought more highly of him. But there was a consensus about Murakami's stubborn aloofness. "Don't tell him I said this," one of the editors pronounced with a smile, "but I think his wife is the problem. She controls everything." Didn't she try to act as his agent? Wasn't she meddling in the publisher's business? In the opinion of another, Murakami didn't understand how publishing really works: "He should know that editors are on his side. Japanese writers are the most pampered in the world."

There is some truth to this. But the expectations of a successful writer go further than producing endless copy. Until twenty-odd years ago, Japanese literature was represented at the top by an informal group of leading writers and critics, known as the Bundan. Members would meet at the same bars, golf courses, and restaurants, sit on the same committees and juries, and decide who should be awarded the important prizes. They defined the hierarchy. Most of these literary lions wrote so-called "pure literature," as opposed to "popular literature." The distinction is vague and sometimes arbitrary, but, as a rule, pure literature has a political or moral message. Writers of pure literature can be drunks, sadists, Marxist revolutionaries, or stern traditionalists, but their books are meant not to entertain so much as to teach, improve, uplift. The writer is a sensei, a teacher or master, as well as a prima donna. And, since book reviewing in Japan is more about public relations than about criticism, writers can count on endless flattery.

By the time Murakami had his first success, in 1979, many of the greatest lions (Mishima, Kawabata, Naoya Shiga) had died. Kenzaburo Oe was still around, of course, but the Bundan no longer carried the same weight as before. The literary world was not really "represented" by anyone. There was no group or distinct hierarchy. And yet the Bundan ethos had not entirely disappeared. Writers were still seen as masters, and were expected to hold forth on everything from nuclear defense to the desirability of birth-control pills. Since Murakami's books were bought in such huge numbers by the young, he was thought to represent the attitudes of his age. So he was treated by the media as a kind of life-style guru.

MURAKAMI complains of finding interviews a chore. Even though he speaks freely, even eloquently, he wants you to think that he cannot express himself well. He distrusts conversation. He once wrote that he made a clear distinction between Murakami the



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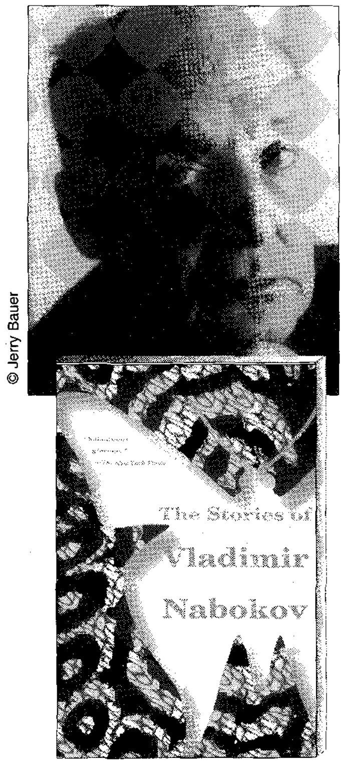
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writer and Murakami the man. Murakami the man was to be kept strictly out of sight. During my first interview with him, at his apartment in Tokyo, he left the room to make some tea. Yoko, who had been listening, suddenly observed, "Haruki is very bad at talking, you know. Sometimes I don't even know whether he loves me." I didn't quite know what to say. Yoko has none of the simpering diffidence that some people still expect from a Japanese wife. But this was not the sort of thing you expect to hear from someone you have just met. And—something unusual in Japan—she always used his first name, as though he were an American. Haruki, she said, hated Chinese food. Haruki couldn't even face a bowl of noodles. Yet Haruki was very interested in China. Again, I didn't quite know how to respond to this information, so I simply made a note of it.

When Murakami returned with the tea, he took up the theme of writing in Japan, and his difficulties with fitting in. "I don't think I have all that much talent, so I need to protect what I have," he said. "Writing fiction is all about concentration, and the Japanese system makes it almost impossible to concentrate." So he had made up his own system, like the young hero in his novel "Dance Dance Dance," published in 1988, who says, after being accused by a famous writer of being stubborn, "I'm not stubborn. I just work according to my system."

Murakami's system is to rise at five o'clock in the morning. Then he writes, runs, swims, writes some more, spends the evening with Yoko, and goes to bed at nine. He likes swimming and marathon running, because they don't involve other people. For comments on his writing, he relies on Yoko. She reads all his manuscripts. "Editors are company employees," Murakami said. "They change jobs. You never know who you are dealing with. My wife, at least, will stick around."

Yoko looked up and said, "I'm not so sure about that."

A tiny smile creased Murakami's face: "For the time being, anyway."

Yoko deals with the outside world, and Haruki writes. It seems the perfect system, at least for a writer who likes to live in his head. She protects him, and he is faithful to her—except when he's working. To Murakami, writing a novel is like falling in love: "That is why I don't have affairs. My books are my love affairs." But the perfect system was not enough to shield him completely from the demands of Japanese celebrity, so in 1986 Haruki and Yoko fled abroad, first to Italy and Greece, and then, in 1991, to the United States, where they lived, in Princeton and Boston, until last year.

I wanted to know how living overseas had affected Murakami. After the virtual reality, how about the real thing? Of course, Italy and Greece were not America. He had not fantasized about Europe in the same way. But I wondered if being in a foreign country had taken Murakami out of his shell. He gave me few clues. Questions about Italy and Greece met with conventional answers: he liked the sun, the outdoor life, but not the inefficiency. Yoko said it was a relief to visit Germany after southern Europe: "The smells! Ugh! And the noise! Terrible!" Alfred Birnbaum, one of Murakami's translators, once accompanied him on a trip to Mexico. Murakami had been commissioned to write about Mexico for a magazine. Birnbaum was struck—and a bit irritated—by Murakami's lack of interest in the history or politics or culture of the place. He refused to read anything about Mexico except one book, which he had found in a bookstore, about dreams in Mayan civilization. Travelling and living abroad stimulated his imagination, yet he never felt inspired to write about foreign countries in his fiction. On the contrary: being overseas inspired him to write about Japan.

We were walking along the beach at Oiso, with surfers on one side and, on the other, a hideous concrete highway obscuring graceful pine and bamboo groves. I asked Murakami whether he was happy to be back in Japan. "Yes," he said. "It's strange, but the farther I got away from Japan the more I felt tied to it." He paused and drew my attention to the sound of crickets chirping in the bushes. "Are Westerners sensitive to the sound of insects?" He suddenly seemed very Japanese—the sweeping division between Japan and the entire Western world, the assumption that Japanese share a unique

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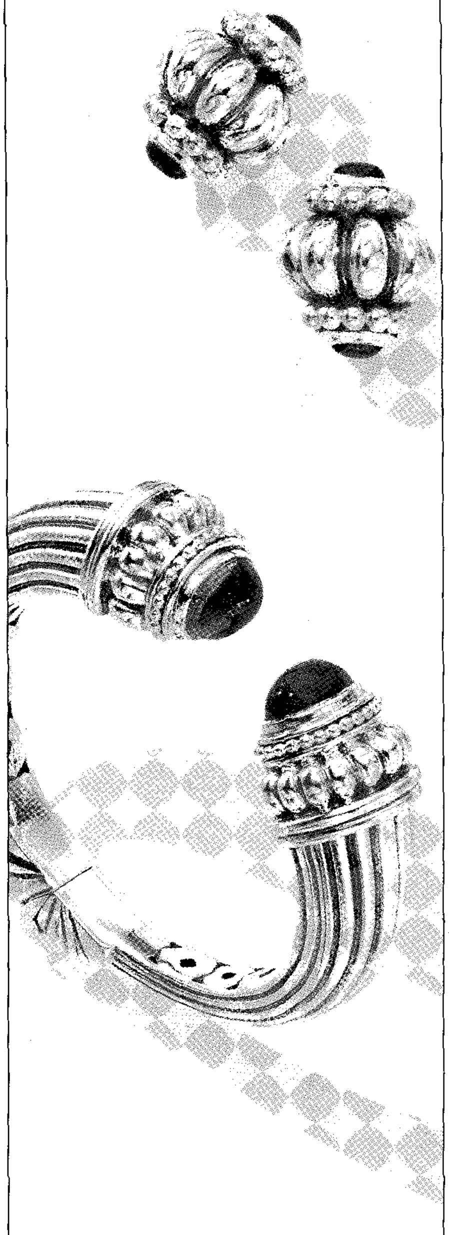

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sensitivity to singing insects. "Japan is a mono-racial country," he continued. "There is this feeling of togetherness, of sharing a landscape, or the imperial system, or, indeed, the love of listening to insects. This can be a dangerous, irrational force, but I feel part of it. I used to hate it, but now I want to find out what is important to me about Japan."

Murakami rediscovered Japan at Princeton, where, teaching Japanese literature, he took a serious interest in Japanese fiction and history for the first time in his life. He researched the Battle of Nomonhan at the Princeton University library. It struck him as the perfect example not only of irrational violence but also of the sacrifice of individuals to a crazy collective enterprise.

Murakami's newfound interest arose not only from academic work but also from his personal life. Having exchanged his private fantasy of America for the real thing, he felt the gap between himself and the country of his dreams widening. "In Japan, I wanted personal independence," he says. "I wanted to be free. In America, I felt free. But Americans take individual freedom and independence for granted. So the question for me was where to go from there. I felt confused."

His American props were no longer escapist fantasies but banal reality. Shopping in American malls, travelling to towns he knew only from pulp fiction and rock-and-roll songs, he found that the references lost their mystique. He said, "Listening to Jim Morrison in the United States is not the same as listening to him in Japan." The Western metaphors, having lost their mystery, became redundant. "I no longer needed the props." He then decided that, as a Japanese writer, he should be more directly involved with Japan—even, in his words, "take political responsibility." This was an extraordinary statement. I asked him what he meant. "The most important thing," he answered, "is to face our history, and that means the history of the war."

And that is why he travelled through Manchuria toward the Mongolian plain, carrying bags of canned food to avoid the Chinese restaurants. It was easy to locate the battle site, because cartridges and shards of rusted Japanese helmets were still scattered on the ground. He returned to his hotel room, with some battlefield souvenirs in his bag, and suddenly he felt as though the building were being rocked in an earthquake. The room went dark, and he could hardly stand. His heart racing, he crawled into the hall, where, astonishingly, all was still. There had been no earthquake. This, Murakami said, as we sat side by side at the sushi counter in Oiso, was his second revelation.

I was skeptical. The scene sounded too much like one from his novels. It was as if he had started to take his metaphors literally.

MURAKAMI talked to me about violence as we walked back from the beach at Oiso in the early evening. It was getting dark. He recalled the violence he had seen at Waseda University in the nineteen-seventies. He spoke about the devastation of the Kobe earthquake and the poison-gas attack in Tokyo. Violence, he said, was the key to Japan. That was the meaning of his revelation at Nomonhan.

"The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle" is different from anything he has written: it reeks not of butter but of blood. There is a palpable sense of physical violence. Murakami describes the slaughter of animals in a zoo just before the Soviets arrived in 1945. Frightened Japanese soldiers kill the leopards, then the wolves, and, finally, the bears, which take the longest time: "Even after they had taken dozens of rifle slugs, the bears continued to crash against the bars of their cage, roaring and slobbering toward the men, their fangs bared." The men all have the same thought: "It was so much easier to kill humans on the battlefield than animals in cages." There is a sickening description of a Mongolian who specializes in torturing his victims by skinning them, "from the top down—slowly, carefully, almost lovingly." And there is the bayonetting of Chinese prisoners: "The three soldiers thrust their bayonets into the Chinese men with tremendous force. Then, as the lieutenant had said, they twisted the blades so as to rip the men's internal organs, then thrust the tips upward."

We sat down for a coffee in the living room of his apartment, in front of the shelves filled with jazz records. Murakami began to speak about his father, from whom he is estranged, and whom he rarely sees anymore. Before the war, his father was a promising student at Kyoto University; then he was drafted into the Army, to fight in China. Once, when Murakami was a child, he heard his father say something deeply shocking about his experience in China. He cannot remember what it was. Perhaps it was something his father had witnessed, or even something he did. But he remembers being terribly distressed. "Perhaps," he said, in his flat voice, which conveys intimate information without sounding intimate, "perhaps that is why I still cannot eat Chinese food." Had he never asked his father about China? "I don't want to," he said. "It must be a trauma for him. So it's a trauma for me as well. We don't get on well. Perhaps that is why I can't have children."

I said nothing. He went on, "I think I inherited his experience in my blood. I believe in that kind of transmission."

Murakami had not meant to talk about his father. It made him uneasy. He called me the next day to ask me not to make too much of it. But surely it was important to him, I said. Yes, he answered, that was true, but it was a delicate matter. I would have liked to press him a bit more. I asked Yoko whether she thought I might visit his father. She was surprised to hear that Murakami had mentioned him to me. "He never talks about that," she said. In any case, Haruki surely wouldn't want me to talk to his father. She was right, of course. He didn't. But Murakami did say one more thing: "You see, I don't want to know the facts. I'm only interested in the effect my blocked memory has on my imagination." I felt that I had stumbled on an area where the writer was tangled up with the man. Murakami's personal memories, his trauma, his imagination, and the fate of his native country had come together in a way that injected his fiction with passion. He says that he always wanted to apply his literary imagination to political ideas. "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle" is his most serious attempt to do so.

It is hard for any writer of fiction to strike the right balance between social engagement and the necessary withdrawal into his or her own imagination. If Murakami can pull it off, he might become the most important Japanese writer of his age. His political engagement would probably enrich his fiction. For he can look at Japan from the inside, and he also knows what it looks like from the outside. He is detached from Japanese society, yet committed to it. He can fix a cool, dry gaze on his wet native soil. The time for escaping is over. He is closer now to where he came from. But, as I think about him now, I still picture him racing along the coastal highway east of Tokyo, on a crisp and sunny day, alone or with Yoko, in his bottle-green Alfa Romeo, with Rossini's "La Gazza Ladra" drowning out all sound. ♦

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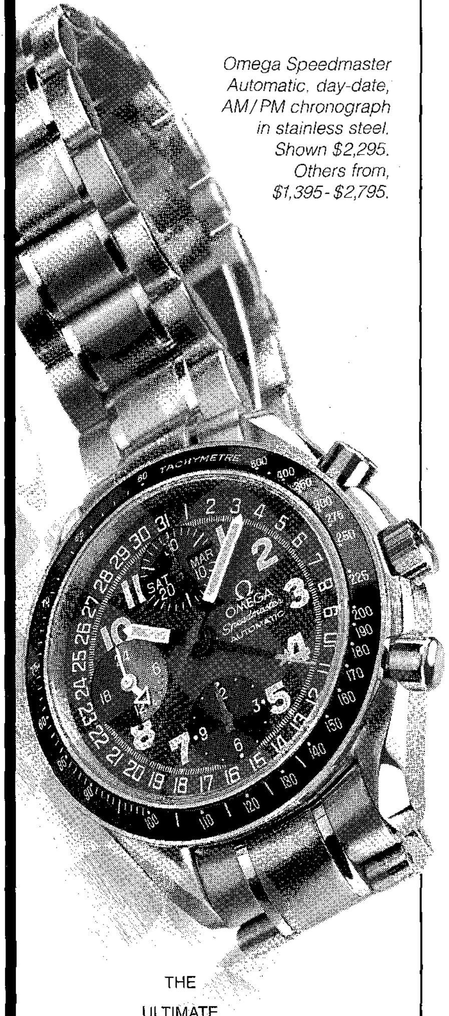

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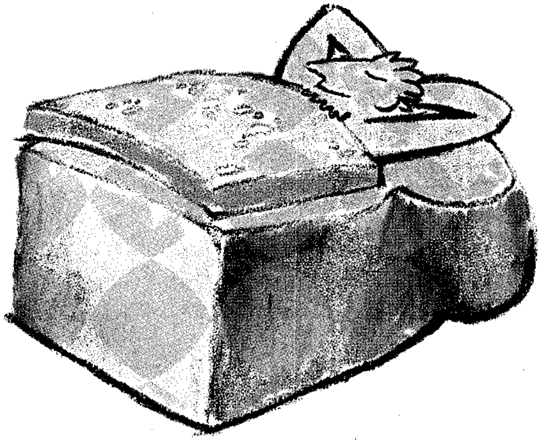
FOOD

ON LEAVENED BREAD

THERE was leavened bread in Bombay, but it was sorry fare: dry, crumbling, tasteless—unleavened bread's paler, unluckier relative. It wasn't "real." Real bread was the chapati, or phulka, served piping hot; the tandoori nan, and its sweeter Frontier variant, the Peshawari nan; and, for luxury, the reshmi roti, the shirmal, the paratha. Compared with these aristocrats, the leavened white loaves of my childhood seemed to merit the description that Shaw's immortal dustman, Alfred Doolittle, dreamed up for people like himself: they were, in truth, "the undeserving poor."



My first inkling that there might be more to leavened bread than I knew came while I was visiting Karachi, Pakistan, where I learned that a hidden order of nuns, in a place known as the Monastery of the Angels, baked a mean loaf. To buy it, you had to get up at dawn—that is, a servant had to get up at dawn—and stand in line outside a small hatch in the monastery's wall. The nuns' baking facilities were limited, the daily run was small, and this secret bakery's reputation was high. Only the early bird caught the loaf. The hatch would open, and a nun would hand the bread out to the waiting populace. Loaves were strictly rationed. No bulk buying was permitted. And the price, of course, was high. (All this I knew only by hearsay, for I never got up at such an unearthly hour to see for myself.)

The nuns' bread—white, crusty, full of flavor—was a small revelation, but it was also, on account of its unusual provenance, eccentric. It came from beyond the frontiers of the everyday, a mystery trailing an anecdote behind it. It was almost—well, fictional. (Later, it became fictional, when I put the monastery in my novel "Midnight's Children.") Now, in the matter of bread such extraordinariness is not good. You want bread to be a part of daily life. You want it to be ordinary. You want it to be there. You don't want to get up in the middle of the night and wait by a hatch in a wall. So, while the Angels' bread was tasty, it felt like an aberration, a break in the natural order. It didn't really change my mind.

Then, aged thirteen and a half, I flew to England. And, suddenly, there it was, in every shopwindow. The White Crusty, the Sliced and the Unsliced. The Small Tin, the Large Tin, the Bloomer. The abandoned, plentiful promiscuity of it. The soft, pillowy mattressiness of it. The well-sprung bounciness of it between your teeth. Hard crust and soft center: the sensuality of that perfect textural contrast. I was done for. In the whorehouses of the bakeries, I was serially, gluttonously, irredeemably unfaithful to all those chapatis next door, waiting for me back home. East was East, but yeast was West.

This, remember, was long before British bread counters were enlivened by the European invasion, long before ciabatta and brioche; this was 1961. But the love affair that began then has never lost its intensity; the new exotic breads have served only to renew the excitement.

I should add that there was a second discovery, almost as thrilling; that is, water. The water back home was dangerous and had to be thoroughly boiled. To be able to drink water from the tap was a privilege indeed. I have never forgotten that when I first arrived in these immeasurably wealthy and powerful lands I found the first proofs of my good fortune in loaf and glass. Since that time, a regime of bread and water has never sounded like a hardship to me.

—SALMAN RUSHDIE

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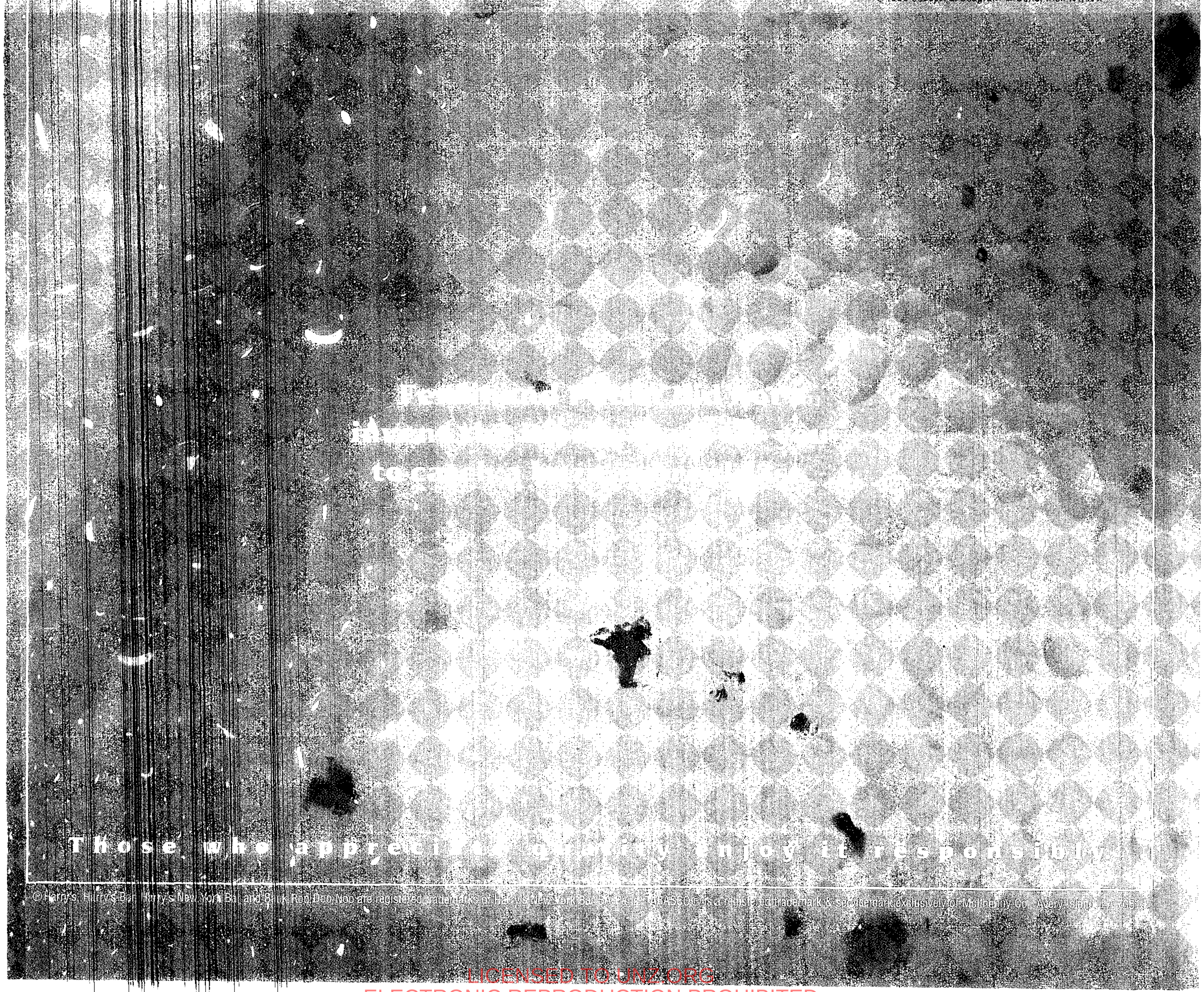

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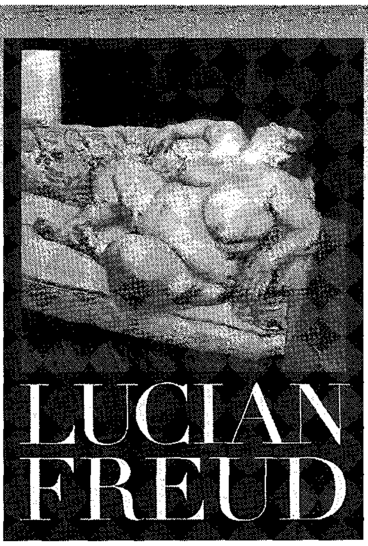

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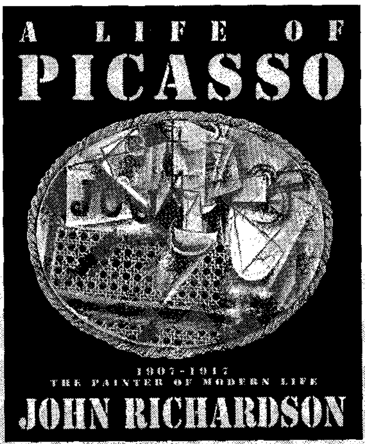

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FICTION

DOG

They're nice to have—a dog.
("The Great Gatsby")

BY RICHARD RUSSO

TRUTH be told, I'm not an easy man. I can be an entertaining one, though it's been my experience that most people don't want to be entertained. They want to be comforted. And, of course, my idea of entertaining might not be yours. According to those who know me best, I am exasperating. According to my parents, I was an exasperating child as well. They divorced when I was in junior high school, and they agree on little except that I was an impossible child. The story they tell of me, William Henry Devereaux, Jr., and my dog is eerily similar in its facts, its conclusions, even the style of its telling, no matter which of them is telling it. Here's the story they tell:

I was nine, and the house we were living in, which belonged to the university, was my fourth. This was the late fifties. My parents were academic nomads, my father then and now an academic opportunist, always in the vanguard of whatever was trendy and chic in literary criticism. In early middle age he was already a full professor, with several published books, all of them "hot," and the subject of intense debate at English Department cocktail parties. The academic position he favored was the "distinguished visiting professor" variety, usually created for him, duration of visit a year or two at the most, perhaps because it's hard to remain distinguished among people who know you. Usually, his teaching responsibilities were light, a course or two a year. Otherwise, he was expected to read and think and write and publish and acknowledge in the preface of his next book the generosity of the institution that provided him with the academic good life. My mother, also an English professor, was hired as part of the package deal, to teach a full load and thereby help balance the books.

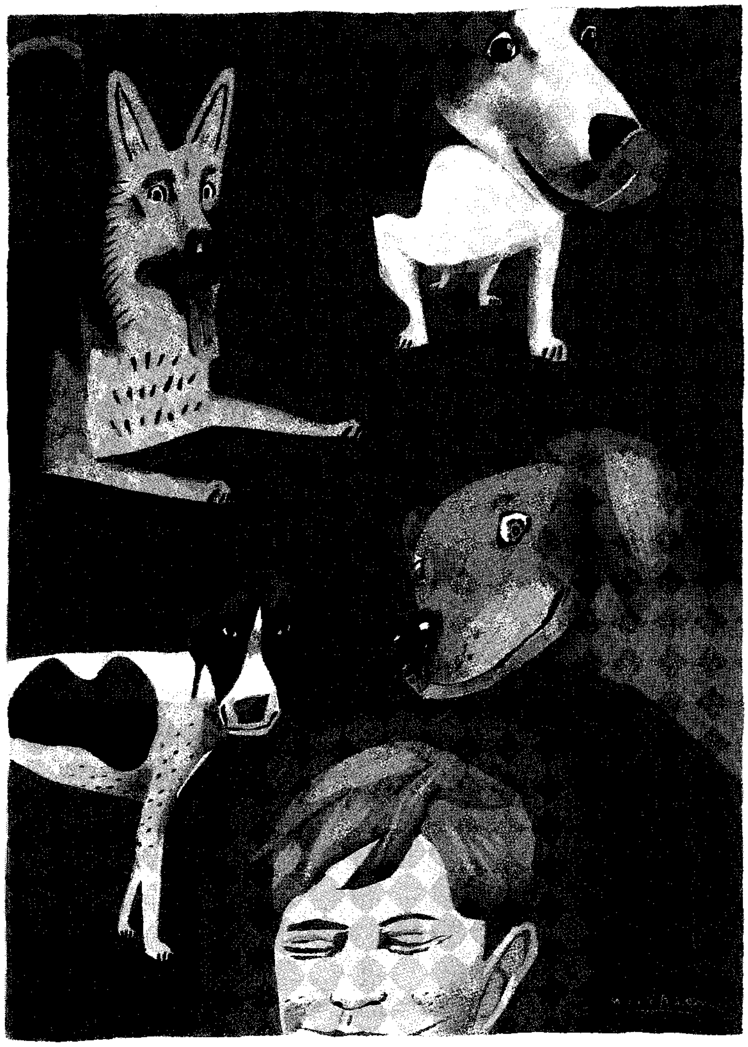
The houses we lived in were elegant, old, high-ceilinged, drafty, either on or close to campus. They had hardwood floors and smoky fireplaces with fires in them only when my father held court, which he did either on Friday afternoons, our large rooms filling up with obsequious junior faculty and nervous grad students, or Saturday evenings, when my mother gave dinner parties for the chairman of the department, or the dean, or a visiting poet. In all situations I was the only child, and I must have been a lonely one, because what I wanted more than anything in the world was a dog.

Predictably, my parents did not. Probably the terms of living in these university houses were specific regarding pets. By the time I was nine I'd been lobbying hard for a dog for a year or two. My father and mother were hoping I would outgrow this longing, given enough time. I could see this hope in their eyes and it steeled my resolve, intensified my desire. What did I want for Christmas? A dog. What did I want for my birthday? A dog. What did I want on my ham sandwich? A dog. It was a deeply satisfying look of pure exasperation they shared at such moments, and if I couldn't have a dog, this was the next best thing.

Life continued in this fashion until finally my mother made a mistake, a doozy of a blunder born of emotional exhaustion and despair. She, far more than my father, would have preferred a happy child. One spring day after I'd been badgering her pretty relentlessly, she sat me down and said, "You know, a dog is something you earn." My father heard this, got up, and left the room, grim acknowledgment that my mother had just conceded the war. Her idea was to make the dog conditional. The conditions to be imposed would be numerous and severe, and I would be incapable of fulfilling them, and so when I didn't get the dog it would be my own fault.

This was her logic, and the fact that she thought such a plan might work illustrates that some people should never be parents and she was one of them.

I immediately put into practice a plan of my own to wear my mother down. Unlike hers, my plan was simple and flawless. Mornings I woke up talking about dogs and nights I fell asleep talking about them. When my mother and father changed the subject, I changed it back. "Speaking of dogs," I would say, a forkful of my mother's roast poised at my lips, and I'd be off again. Maybe no one *had* been speaking of dogs, but, never mind, we were speaking of them now. At the library I checked out half a dozen books on dogs every two weeks and left them lying open around the house. I pointed out dogs we passed on the street, dogs on television, dogs in the magazines my mother subscribed to. I discussed the relative merits of various breeds at every meal. My father seldom listened to anything I said, but I began to see signs that the underpinnings of my mother's personality were beginning to corrode in the salt water of my tidal persistence, and when I judged that she was nigh to complete collapse I took every penny of the allowance money I'd been saving and spent it on a dazzling, bejewelled dog-collar-and-leash set at the overpriced pet store around the corner.



What did I want for Christmas? A dog.
What did I want for my birthday? A dog.

MARK ULRIKSEN

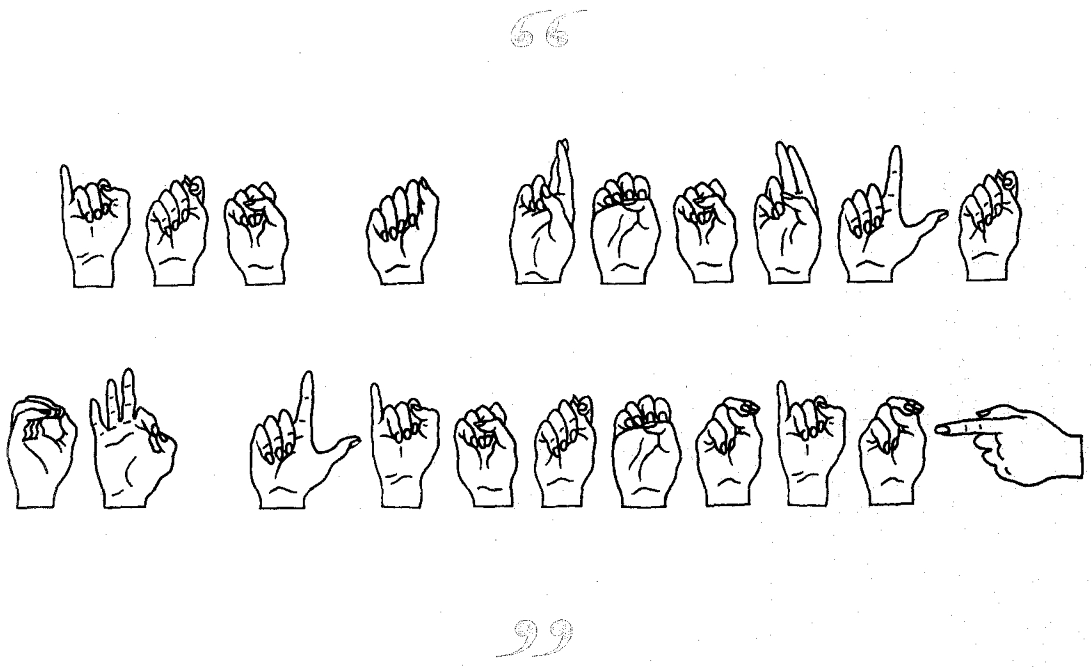
During this period when we were constantly "speaking of dogs," I was not a model boy. I was supposed to be "earning a dog," and I was constantly checking with my mother to see how I was doing, just how much of a dog I'd earned, but I doubt whether my behavior changed a jot. I wasn't really a bad boy. Just a noisy, busy, constantly needy boy. Mr. In-and-Out, my mother called me, because I was in and out of rooms, in and out of doors, in and out of the refrigerator. "Henry," my mother would plead with me, "light somewhere." One of the things I often needed was information, and I constantly interrupted my mother's reading and paper grading to get it. My father, partly to avoid having to answer my questions, spent most of his time in his book-lined office on campus, joining my mother and me only at mealtimes, so that we could speak of dogs as a family. Then he was gone again, blissfully unaware, I thought at the time, that my mother continued to glare homicidally, for long minutes after his departure, at the chair he'd so recently occupied. But he claimed to be close to finishing the book he was working on, and this was a powerful excuse to offer a woman with as much abstract respect for books and learning as my mother possessed.

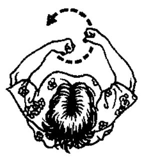
Gradually, she came to understand that she was fighting a battle she couldn't win, and that she was fighting it alone. I now know that this was part of a larger cluster of bitter marital realizations, but at the time I sniffed nothing in the air but victory. In late August, during what people refer to as the dog days, when she made one last weak condition, final evidence that I had earned a dog, I relented and truly tried to reform my behavior. It was literally the least I could do.

What my mother wanted of me was to stop slamming the screen door. The house we were living in, it must be said, was an acoustic marvel akin to the Whispering Gallery in the dome of St. Paul's, where muted voices travel across a great open space and arrive, clear and intact, at the other side of the great dome. In our house the screen door swung shut on a tight spring, the straight wooden edge of the door encountering the doorframe like a gunshot played through a guitar amplifier set on stun, the crack transmitting perfectly, with equal force and clarity, to every room in the house, upstairs and down. That summer I was in and out that door dozens of times a day, and my mother said it was like living in a shooting gallery. It made her wish the door wasn't shooting blanks. If I could just remember not to slam the door, then she'd see about a dog. Soon.

I did better, remembering about half the time not to let the door slam. When I forgot, I came back in to apologize, though sometimes I forgot then, too. Still, I was trying, and that, combined with the fact that I carried the expensive dog collar and leash with me everywhere I went, apparently moved my mother, because at the end of that first week of diminished door slamming my father went somewhere on Saturday morning, refusing to reveal where, so of course I knew. "What *kind*?" I pleaded with my

Holly Daniel L-O-V-E-S her Saturn.





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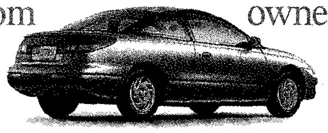

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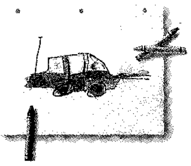

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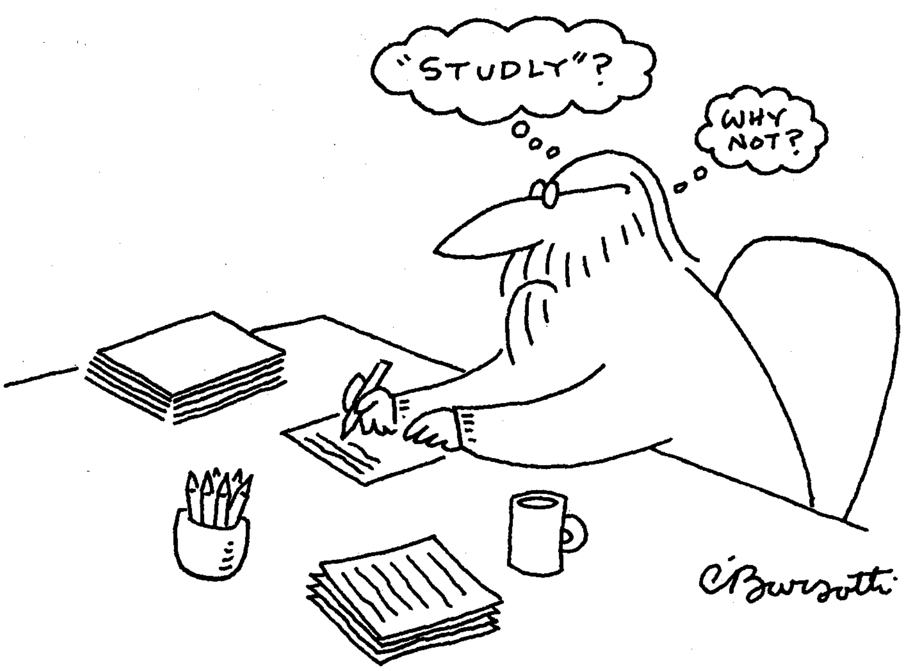
"STUDLY"?
WHY NOT?
CBarsotti

mother while he was gone. But she claimed not to know. "Your father's doing this," she said, and I thought I saw a trace of misgiving in her expression.

When he returned, I saw why. He'd put it in the back seat, and when he pulled the car in and parked along the side of the house, I saw from the kitchen window its chin resting on the back of the rear seat. I think it saw me, too, but if so it did not react. Neither did it seem to notice that the car had stopped, that my father had got out and was holding the front seat forward. He had to reach in, take the dog by the collar, and pull.

As the animal unfolded its long legs and stepped tentatively, arthritically, out of the car, I saw that I had been both betrayed and outsmarted. In all the time we had been "speaking of dogs," what I'd been seeing in my mind's eye was puppies. Collie puppies, beagle puppies, Lab puppies, shepherd puppies, but none of that had been inked anywhere, I now realized. If not a puppy, a young dog. A rascal, full of spirit and possibility, a dog with new tricks to learn. *This* dog was barely ambulatory. It stood, head down, as if ashamed at something done long ago in its puppydom, and I thought I detected a shiver run through its frame when my father closed the car door behind it.

The animal was, I suppose, what might have been called a handsome dog. A purebred, rust-colored Irish setter, meticulously groomed, wonderfully mannered, the kind of dog you could safely bring into a house owned by the university, the sort of dog that wouldn't really violate the no-pets clause, the kind of dog, I saw clearly, you'd get if you really didn't want a dog or to be bothered with a dog. It had belonged, I later learned, to a professor emeritus of the university who'd been put into a nursing home earlier in the week, leaving the animal an orphan. It was like a painting of a dog, or a dog you'd hire to pose for a portrait, a dog you could be sure wouldn't move.

Both my father and the animal came into the kitchen reluctantly, my father closing the screen door behind them with great care. I like to think that on the way home he'd suffered a misgiving, though I could tell that it was his intention to play the hand out boldly. My mother, who'd taken in my devastation at a glance, studied me for a moment and then my father.

"What?" he said.

My mother just shook her head.

My father looked at me, then back at her. A violent shiver palsied the dog's limbs. The animal seemed to want to lie down on the cool linoleum but to have forgotten how. It offered a deep sigh that seemed to speak for all of us.

"He's a good dog," my father said, rather pointedly, to my mother. "A little high-strung, but that's the way with purebred setters. They're all nervous."

This was not the sort of thing my father knew. Clearly he was repeating the explanation he'd been given when he picked up the dog.

"What's his name?" my mother said, apparently for something to say.

My father had neglected to ask. He checked the dog's collar for clues.

"Lord," my mother said. "Lord, Lord."

"It's not like we can't name him ourselves," my father said, irritated now. "I think it's something we can manage, don't you?"

"You could name him after a passé school of literary criticism," my mother suggested.

"It's a she," I said, because it was.

It seemed to cheer my father, at least a little, that I'd allowed myself to be drawn into the conversation. "What do you say, Henry?" he wanted to know. "What'll we name him?"

This second faulty pronoun reference was too much for me. "I want to go out and play now," I said, and I bolted for the screen door before an objection could be registered. It slammed behind me, hard, its gunshot report even louder than normal. As I cleared the steps in a single leap, I thought I heard a thud back in the kitchen, a dull muffled echo of the door, and then I heard my father say, "What the hell?" I went back up the steps, cautiously now, meaning to apologize for the door. Through the screen I could see my mother and father standing together in the middle of the kitchen, looking down at the dog, which seemed to be napping. My father nudged a haunch with the toe of his cordovan loafer.

He dug the grave in the back yard with a shovel borrowed from a neighbor. My father had soft hands and they blistered easily. I offered to help, but he just looked at me. When he was standing, mid-thigh, in the hole he'd dug, he shook his head one last time in disbelief. "Dead," he said. "Before we could even name him."

I knew better than to correct the pronoun again, so I just stood there thinking about what he'd said while he climbed out of the hole and went over to the back porch to collect the dog where it lay under an old sheet. I could tell by the careful way he tucked that sheet under the animal that he didn't want to touch anything dead, even newly dead. He lowered the dog into the hole by means of the sheet, but he had to drop it the last foot or so. When the animal thudded on the earth and lay still, my father looked over at me and shook his head. Then he picked up the shovel and leaned on it before he started filling in the hole. He seemed to be waiting for me to say something, so I said, "Red."

My father's eyes narrowed, as if I'd spoken in a foreign tongue. "What?" he said.

"We'll name her Red," I explained.

IN the years after he left us, my father became even more famous. He is sometimes credited, if credit is the word, with being the Father of American Literary Theory. In addition to his many books of scholarship, he has also written a literary memoir that was short-listed for a major award and which offers insight into the personalities of several major literary figures of the twentieth century, now deceased. His photograph often graces the pages of the literary reviews. He went through a phase where he wore crewneck sweaters and gold chains beneath his tweed coat, but now he's photographed mostly in an oxford-cloth button-down shirt, tie, and jacket, in his book-lined office at the university. But to me, his son, William Henry Devereaux, Sr., is most real standing before me in his ruined cordovan loafers, leaning on the handle of a borrowed shovel, examining his dirty, blistered hands and receiving my suggestion of what to name a dead dog. I suspect that digging our dog's grave was one of relatively few experiences in his life (excepting carnal ones) that did not originate on the printed page. And when I suggested that we name the dead dog Red, he looked at me as if I myself had just stepped from the pages of a book he'd started to read years ago and then put down when something else caught his interest. "What?" he said, dropping the shovel, so that its handle hit the earth between my feet. "What?"

It's not an easy time for any parent, this moment when the realization dawns that you've given birth to something that will never see things the way you do, despite the fact that it is your living legacy, that it bears your name. ♦

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FICTION

THE BLACK-AND-WHITE BALL

Edgar and Clyde, Clyde and Edgar: powerful, American, a team.

BY DON DeLILLO

I.

THE first man stood by the window of his stately suite at the Waldorf. He watched the yellow cabs sink into soulful dusk, that particular spendthrift light that falls dyingly on Park Avenue in the hour before people take leave of the office and become husbands and wives again, or whatever people become in whatever murmurous words when evenings grow swift and whispered.

The second man sat on the sofa, legs crossed, looking at Bureau reports.

Edgar said, "Of course you packed the mask."

The second man nodded, a gesture that went unseen.

"Junior, the masks."

"We have them, yes. I'm looking at a security memo that's a little, actually, rankling."

"I don't want to hear it. File it somewhere. I feel too good."

"Protest. Outside the Plaza tonight."

"What is it the bastards are protesting? Pray tell," Edgar said in a tone he'd perfected through the years, a tight amusement etched in eleven kinds of irony.

"The war, it seems."

"The war."

"Yes, that," the second man said.

They were staying at the Waldorf Towers, which was J. Edgar Hoover's hotel of choice during his sojourns in New York, but the party was taking place—the ball, the fête, the social event of the season, the decade, the half century no doubt—in the ballroom at the Plaza.

Edgar gazed far up Park, where the earth curved toward Canada, haven for draft dodgers and other misfits. He heard the muted clamor of taxi horns below, a cheerful sound at this protected distance, little toots and beeps that carried a carefree pitch.

"Let's talk about the war tomorrow."

"A protest by a group we don't know much about."

"Don't ruin my evening, Junior."

Clyde Tolson, known as Junior, was Edgar's staunchest aide in the Bureau, his dearest friend and inseparable companion.

They were getting on, of course. Clyde was five years younger than Edgar but not so sharp as he used to be, his flash-card memory a little less prodigious now. But where Edgar was pug-nosed and compact, with brows like bat wings, Clyde was long-jawed and tallish, sort of semi-debonair, a fairly gentle fellow who liked conversation—again, unlike his boss, who thought you gave yourself away, word by word, every time you opened your trap to speak.

Edgar held a tumbler of Scotch. He checked the glass for smudges, then sniffed and sipped, feeling the charred fumes prickle his tongue. The handsome suite, the soothing booze, the presence of Junior on the scene, the party that everybody'd been talking about for months, famous long before it happened, the uninvited lapsing into states of acute confusion, insomniac, unable to function—yes, Edgar was feeling pretty good tonight.

Talkative or not, he loved a first-rate party. He loved celebrities in particular, and there would be an abundance of mammal glamour at the Plaza tonight. Personage and flair and wicked wit. A frail and lonely lad still crouched inside the Director's pudgy corpus, and this crypto-schoolboy came to robust life in the presence of show people and other living icons—child stars, ballplayers, prizefighters, even Hollywood horses and dogs.

Celebrated people were master spirits, men and women who spiked the temper of the age. Whatever Edgar's own claim to rank and notoriety, he found himself subject to anal flutters when chatting with a genuine celeb.

Clyde said, "And this, of course, as well."

Edgar did not turn to see what the second man was reading. He studied the carpet instead. The carpets at the Waldorf were thick and lush, nesting grounds for bacteria of every sort.

Clyde said, "I knew it was a mistake to publicize our methods of ransacking the garbage of organized-crime figures."

"Makes good copy."

"And creates a copycat mentality. Now we have a situation that's a public-relations nightmare. To wit, so-called garbage guerrillas are targeting guess whose garbage, Boss?"

"Please. I'm enjoying my drink. A man enjoys a drink when the day winds down."

"Yours," Clyde said.

Edgar could not believe he'd heard the fellow correctly.

"This is what our confidential source tells us." And Clyde rattled the page he was reading for maximum nuisance effect. "Team of urban guerrillas planning a garbage raid at 4936 Thirtieth Place Northwest, Washington, D.C."

It was the end of the world, in triplicate.

"When is this supposed to happen?"

"More or less momentarily."

"You've posted guards?"

"In unmarked cars. But whether we arrest them or not, they will find a way to make public theatre of your garbage."

"I won't put the garbage out."

"You have to put it out eventually."

"I'll put it out and lock it up."

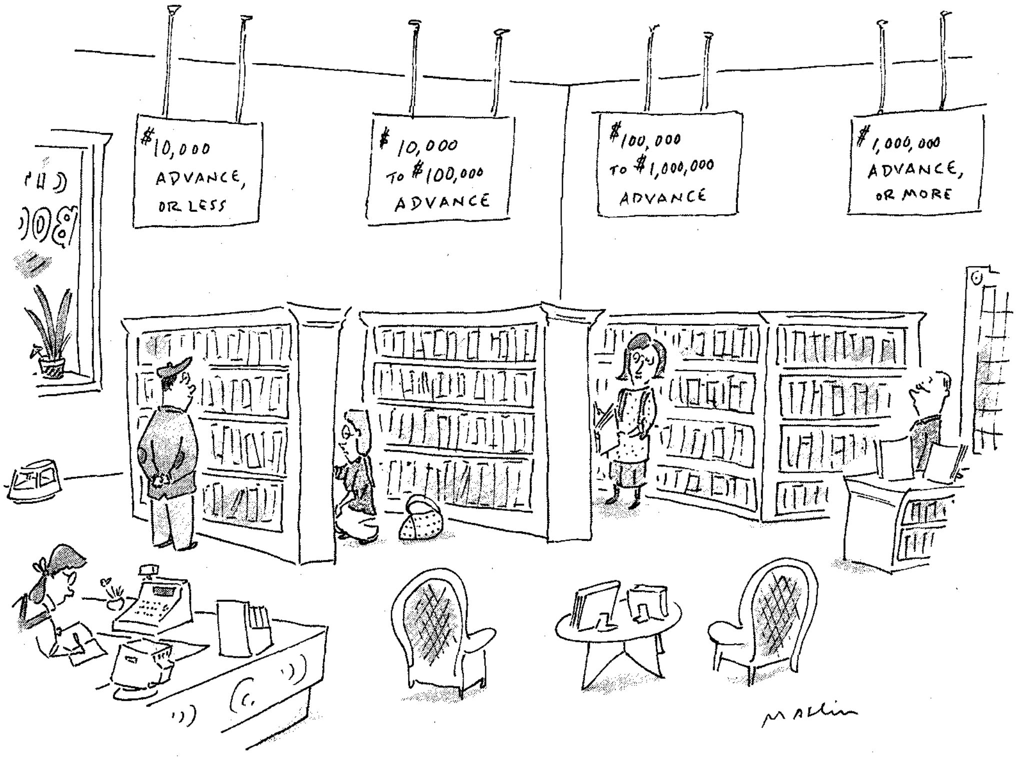
"How will the garbage collectors collect it?"

Edgar walked over to another window. He needed a change, as they say, of scene.

"Confidential source says they intend to take your garbage on tour. Rent halls in major cities. Get lefty sociologists to analyze the stuff item by item. Get hippies to rub it on their naked

BURTON BERINSKY

The ballroom seemed to throb with interests and appetites. Political power mingling lubriciously with art and literature.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bodies. More or less have sex with it. Get poets to write poems about it. In the last city on the tour, they plan to eat it."

Edgar could see part of the east façade of the Plaza, about a dozen blocks away.

"And expel it," Clyde said. "Publicly."

The great slate roof, the gables and dormers and copper cresting. How odd it seemed that such a taken-for-granted thing, putting out the garbage, could suddenly be a source of the gravest anxiety.

"Do we have a dossier on these guerrillas?"

"Yes."

"Is it massive?" Edgar said.

In the endless estuarial mingling of paranoia and control, the dossier was an essential device. Edgar had many enemies-for-life, and the way to deal with such people was to compile massive dossiers. Photographs, surveillance reports, detailed allegations, linked names, transcribed tapes—wiretaps, bugs, break-ins. The dossier was a deeper form of truth, transcending facts and actuality. The second you placed an item in the file, a fuzzy photograph, an unfounded rumor, it became promiscuously true. It was a truth without authority and therefore incontestable. Factoids seeped out of the file and crept across the horizon, consuming bodies and minds. The file was everything, the life nothing. And this was the essence of Edgar's revenge. He rearranged the lives of his enemies, their conversations, their relationships, their very memories, and he made these people answerable to the details of his creation.

"We'll arrest them and charge them," Clyde said. "That's all we can do."

Edgar turned from the window, smiling.

"Maybe I can sympathize with the Mafia over this."

Clyde smiled.

"You were always half a gangster," he said.

They laughed.

"Remember the tommy guns we carried?" Edgar said.

"When photographers were around."

They laughed again.

"You were right there alongside me, posed heroically."

"Edgar and Clyde," said Clyde.

"Clyde and Edgar," said Edgar.

Where the current of his need for control met the tide of his paranoia, this was where the dossier was reciprocally satisfying. He fed both forces in a single stroke.

"I liked the thirties," Edgar said. "I don't like the sixties. No, not at all."

The desk at the end of the room was out of the thirties, in a way, equipped with items fashioned to Edgar's specifications. Two nibbed black pens. Two bottles of Skrip Permanent Royal Blue ink, No. 52. Six sharpened Eberhard Faber pencils, No. 2. A pair of five-by-eight linen-finish writing pads, white. A new sixty-watt bulb in the standing lamp. The Director did not want to breathe the dust of old bulbs used to illuminate the reading matter of total strangers. Newspapers, guidebooks, Gideon Bibles, erotic literature, subversive literature, underground literature, literature—whatever people read in hotels, alone, thumbing and breathing.

Clyde checked his watch. Dinner first, the two of them, alone, a practice spanning the decades—then the short ride to the Plaza.

IT was called the Black-and-White Ball. A godlike gathering of five hundred, a masked affair, invitation only, dinner jacket and black mask for men, evening gown and white mask for women.

The party was being given by a writer, Truman Capote, for a publisher, Katharine Graham, and the factoidal data generated by the guests would surely bridge the narrowing gap between journalism and fiction.

Edgar had not been invited, initially. But arranging an invitation was not difficult. A word from Edgar to Clyde. A word from Clyde to someone close to Capote. They were in the files, of course, a number of those involved in planning the event—all catalogued and dossiered up to their eyeballs, and none of them eager to offend the Director.

Clyde took a call from the desk. The mask lady was coming up for a fitting.

Edgar noticed that Clyde was wearing a necktie with a driblet design. The little figures made him think of paramecia, sinister organisms with gullets and feeding grooves. At home Edgar sat on a toilet that was raised on a platform, to isolate him from floorbound forms of life.

And he'd ordered his lab people to build a clean room at the Bureau with unprecedented standards of hygiene. A white room manned by white-clad technicians, preferably white themselves, who would work in an environment completely free of contaminants, dust, bacteria, and so on, with big white lights shining down, where Edgar himself might like to spend time when he was feeling vulnerable to the forces around him.

She walked in the door, Tanya Berenger, in a maxidress and thrift-shop boots, once a well-known costume designer, now ancient and frowzy, living in a room in a sad hotel off Times Square, a place where the desk clerk sits behind a grille eating a tongue sandwich. People tracked her down, three or four times a year, to do masks for special occasions, and she found fairly steady work doing sadomasochistic accessories for a private club in the Village.

The two men, as always with a female in the room, someone they didn't know, and without others present, and lacking an atmosphere of sociable cheer—well, they tended to become stiff and defensive, as though surprised by an armed intruder.

Clyde did not stray from Edgar's side, sensing a potential for wayward behavior on the woman's part. She wore heavy makeup that she might have poured from a paint can and cooked. Clyde noted how one pocket on her dress drooped just a bit, becoming unseamed.

She spoke to Edgar with a sort of rueful affection.

"You know I can't let you wear one of my masks, dear man, without a consultation. I must put my hands on the living head. Bad enough I had to create my *objet* from a set of written specifications, like I'm a plumber installing a sink already."

She had a European accent slashed and burned by long-term residence in New York. And her hair had the retouched gloss of a dead crow mounted on a stick.

Of course Clyde had been briefed on Tanya Berenger. She was in the files in a fairly big way. She'd been accused at various times of being a lesbian, a Socialist, a Communist, a dope addict, a divorcée, a Jew, a Catholic, a Negro, an immigrant, and an unwed mother.

Just about everything Edgar distrusted and feared. But she did exquisite masks, and Clyde had been quick to commission her for the job.

He hurried into Edgar's bedroom and fetched the mask.

When she held it in her hands, she looked at Edgar and looked at the mask, weighing the equation, and the Director experienced a queer tension in his chest, wondering whether he was worthy.

She held the object at eye level, six inches from her face, and looked through the eyeholes at Edgar.

And Edgar, in turn, looked at the mask as if it had a life, an identity of its own that he might feel ballsy enough to borrow for a single midnight on the town.

It was a sleek black leather mask with handlebar extensions at the temples and a scatter of shiny sequins around the eyes.

Tanya said, "You want to put it on or have a conversation with it?"

But he wasn't quite ready.

"Do I want to put it on, Junior?"

"Be brave."

Tanya said, "Leather. It's so real, you know? Like wearing someone else's face."

She fitted the mask over Edgar's head, the padded band not too tight and the leather alive on his skin.

Then she took him by the shoulders and turned him slowly toward the mirror over the desk.

Clyde took the whiskey glass from Edgar's hand.

The mask transformed him. For the first time in some years, he did not see himself as a tenant in an old short popover body with an immense and lumpish head.

"I can call you Edgar—this is O.K.? I can tell you how I see you? I see you as a mature and careful man who has a sexy motorcycle thug writhing to get out. Which the spangles give a crazy twist, you know?"

He felt creamy, dreamy, and drugged.

She made a slight adjustment in the fit, and even as he cringed at her touch Edgar felt himself tingle thrillingly. She was insidious and corrupt, and it was like hearing your grandmother talk dirty in your ear.

"You are a butch biker to me, you know, riding into town to take over leadership of the sadists and necrophiles."

Clyde watched in civilized alarm as a cockroach crawled out of Tanya's pocket and moved slowly down her flank. It was Spanish Harlem-sized, with antennae that could pick up the BBC.

"It's a lovely fit, darling. You have savage cheekbones for a full-figured man. I would love to do the total face, you know? Highlights and shadows."

Clyde took her gently by the arm, concealing her roach side from Edgar's view.

"In fact, shall I tell you something? The ball tonight is a perfect setting for

Victoria Roberts

"I'm staying in my nightie until 1997."

you. Because you are very black-and-white to me. So you'll be totally in character, yes?"

When she was gone, the men busied themselves with practical preparations. Clyde made dinner reservations and set out their evening clothes. Edgar placed the mask on a tabletop and took a bath.

When he was finished, he put on his fluffy white robe and stood by the window, sipping the rest of the drink. He heard a sound above the beeping traffic, something strident rising in the night.

"Junior, that noise. Can you hear it?"

Clyde walked into the room in his shirtsleeves, a shoebrush in hand.

"Yes, barely."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, it could be the protesters at the Plaza."

"The wind."

"Yes, the wind is carrying the sound this way."

They heard the hard rhythmic salvo of voices chanting angry slogans, again, louder, fading when the wind shifted, then audible once more.

"You know what they want, don't you?" Edgar said.

He thought the old alarums might be sounding once again, figures coming out of the shadows, anarchists, terrorists, revolutionaries, wild-eyed men and women, scruffy and free-fucking, who moved toward armed and organized resistance, trying to break the state and bring about the end of the existing order.

"They want the power to shake the world," he said. "It's the old Bolshevik dream, and it's happening here. And you know where it begins, don't you?"

"These are kids, mostly, who lie down in the street and wave flowers at the police," Clyde said. "Vietnam is the war, the reality. This is the movie, where the scripts are written and the actors perform. American kids don't want to seize control. They want movies, music."

Let Junior devise his measured perceptions. He didn't understand that once you patronize the enemy, you begin the process of your own undoing.

"It begins in the inmost person," Edgar said. "Once you yield to random sexual urges, you want to see everything come loose. You mistake your own looseness for some political concept, whereas in truth . . ."

He didn't finish the thought. Some thoughts had to remain unspoken, even unfinished in one's own mind. This was the point of his relationship with Clyde. To keep the subject unspoken. To keep the feelings unfelt, the momentary urges unacted-upon. How strange and foolish this would seem to the young people running in the streets, or living six to a room, or three to a bed, and to many other people, for that matter—how sad and rare.

Clyde went back to his duties, leaving the Boss by the window.

Edgar thought there was something noble in a constant companionship that does not fall to baser claims. He assumed Clyde believed likewise. But then Clyde was the second man, wasn't he, and perhaps he only followed Edgar's line of march wherever it led, or didn't.

He heard the chanting intermittently on the wind. Clyde was in the shower now. Edgar turned to see where he'd left the mask and saw himself unexpectedly in a full-length mirror, across the room, in his white robe and soft slippers, and he was startled by the image.

Of course it was him, but him in the guise of a macrocephalic baby, sexless and so just born as to be, in essence, unearthly.

Mother Hoover's cuddled runt.

He crossed the room and picked up the mask. He noted how the stylized handlebars were simple swirls of cut leather designed to fit snugly over the temples.

He heard Clyde come out of the shower.

When they were younger and on vacation together, or away on business, sharing a suite or taking adjoining rooms and keeping the connecting door open so they could talk from their respective beds well into the night, Edgar sometimes managed to angle the mirrors in such a way that he could catch a glimpse—by taking the freestanding antique in an old inn, the cheval glass, for example, and simply moving it to another part of the floor, or opening the medicine cabinet to a certain position when he shaved and letting the mirror absorb the light from the bed in the next room, or leaving a hand mirror propped on a desk—a glimpse, a passing glance, a spy-hole peek at Junior as he busied himself dressing or undressing or taking a bath, the arrangement being such that the moment would seem wholly accidental should the subject realize he was being watched, and an accident not just from his perspective but to Edgar's own mind as well, Junior's likeness being a thing that might simply float across his ken in the normal course of events, away on urgent Bureau business, his companion's body lean and virile, or at a golf resort, or following the ponies west to Del Mar, when they were both a great deal younger.

Junior was going bald now, and bulb-nosed, and he walked with a stoop. But then Junior had always walked with a stoop, in an effort to appear no taller than the Boss.

Edgar was in the bedroom with the door closed. He stood at the mirror, a seventy-one-year-old man wearing nothing but his sequinned biker's mask and his wool-lined slippers, listening to the voices in the street.

II.

THE second man made the decision to show up late. It was the kind of firm determination that Clyde Tolson liked to make.

It proved his mettle. And when you're a man who is variously described as dutiful, deferential, obsequious, slavish, and brownnosingly corrupt, in descending order of distinction, you need to make a show of character now and then.

But first Clyde had to convince the Boss that missing an hour or two of party time was not going to haunt the twilight years of his directorate.

An F.B.I. security detail at the Plaza had reported that the protest was growing loud and that the party guests, as they entered, were being cursed in rhyming couplets, exposed to obscene signs and gestures, spat upon at close range, and forced to duck an occasional flying object.

It did not make sense to Clyde to allow the Director to enter a situation—and Edgar finally agreed—in which the dignity of the Bureau might be compromised.

So it was midnight when the two men rolled through the deserted midtown streets in their bulletproof black Cadillac. They'd had a leisurely dinner, bantering with the wine steward and then enjoying a brandy at the bar with old acquaintances because there were old acquaintances wherever J. Edgar Hoover went, some who were loyal supporters, others residing in the files, a few who were enemies-for-life but didn't know it, and Edgar and Clyde were in a mellow enough mood, despite reports from the site, seated in the plush rear seat, in black tie, of course, and wearing their masks, like a suave and jaunty crime fighter out of the Sunday comics—a master bureaucrat by day who becomes dashing Maskman at night—cruising the streets in formal dress with his trusted right-hand man.

The driver activated the intercom to report that a car was tailing them.

Clyde turned to look while the Director slumped in his seat, getting his head below the window line.

"Little Volkswagen bug," Clyde said. "Painted top to bottom in very bright colors. Psychedelic. Big bright swirls and streaks. Can't make out the driver's face."

The Cadillac coasted slowly past the Plaza. The klieg lights were gone, the media pack was gone, there was no trace of the crush of curious onlookers drawn by news of the event. There were still a few demonstrators—not enough to cause concern, but a few—a scatter of young people in their grimy tie-dyes, and city cops, of course, idler still, showing the eternal laden strain of a big meal hustled down the gullet, where it sits for hours earning overtime.

The car circled the block, purring with bated power, and Clyde checked the other entrances.

The north steps were empty and he tapped on the glass, and the driver pulled up and the two men exited, and suddenly there was the VW, cutting in front, and people came scrambling out, three, four, six, what, seven people—it's a circus car debouching clowns—about nine people tumbling onto the sidewalk and hurrying up the steps to flank the doorway.

All wore masks, the faces of Asian kids, some blood-spattered, others with eyes seamed shut, and they commenced their shouting as Hoover and Tolson moved up the stairs.

The first man was clumsy and slow and the second took his arm to assist, and they made their plodding way toward the entrance.

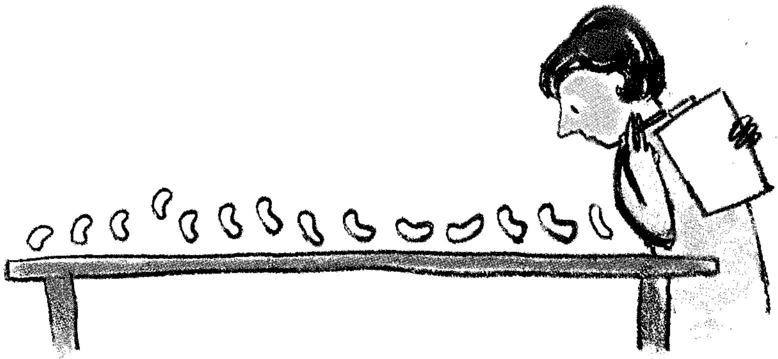
They heard, "Society scum!"

They heard, "A dead Asian baby for every Gucci loafer!"

Clyde wasn't sure the protesters knew

FOOD

BEANS



When I was growing up, I thought only the Italians might have it over us—at least, in the great matter of food. In our low-rent tenement in New Rochelle, there were fourteen apartments to a floor, and at dinnertime you could walk by the doors and know in a breath the life of the folks inside. People didn't cook ethnic dishes then; they just cooked what they knew, and they did it the old way—indelicate and straight. The Puerto Rican couple in 2-G were always stewing pork cheeks and feet; the Chinese family by the elevator deep-fried whole schools of fish; and my mother fermented Korean bachelor radish—so called for its agog, longish shape—by the kilo. I was always pleased to reach home, but I couldn't help stopping at 2-L and 2-M. I could smell the sweet wafts escaping beneath doors marked Prunesti and Spano, and I craved fuller blasts of their garlicky genius.

So was it only by chance that I married into a Sicilian family? My wife's grandmother Nanna seems to believe that I've always belonged. "The way you eat, Chang," she tells me, giving me a second or a third helping, "you'd think you had the blood in you." I've done my best, but only through Nanna have I begun to fathom the true heart of the Italian kitchen—the humble fagioli, the beans.

At first, I was skeptical. Beans? They seemed so inglorious. I had always been drawn to the strong, bracing flavors that seemed to match the food I had been reared on—the kalbi and kimchi, the fiery sweet and the salt. But one day Nanna showed me how to make the fagioli the way her mother had done it—stewed plain, in water, with sea salt and a few drops of olive oil. She mentioned, too, that they could even save one's life. This was her overture to telling a story, the secret life of a dish.

Nanna's sister Carmela had been gravely ill with measles (this would have been in Sicily, in 1919), and a doctor had said sombrely that it was her time. But then the girl, still in a fever, spoke: "I had a dream, Mama, of white beans." To Nanna's mother, it was clear that this was a message from God—it was His cure. While Nanna watched the baby, her younger brother, her mother cooked. A little past midnight, she roused Carmela and fed her the beans. The next morning, Carmela was no better, though, and by the time the doctor arrived even her mother had lost hope. But while he was examining Carmela she sat up and began to cry. He checked her temperature and her heart: she would live. The doctor shook his head; this was a miracle that no learning could explain. Then, as he was leaving, he came upon the baby in the bassinet and peered in. The doctor asked how long he'd been ill. No one knew what he meant. "This boy is very sick," he said. "He has the measles." Nanna's mother cried out, declaring that her son was well, and the doctor said, "In his mouth, Signora. The poor boy, he has it on the inside."

The baby died; he was too small and too weak to eat the white beans. I imagined him, elfin, too late for deliverance. Nanna sighed; she'd been cooking all morning, and it was time for her bath. She asked if I would sit and watch the slowly boiling beans, and I said that I would. Already I hungered for them, for the drift of their soon sweet smell, as if through a door of the past. —Chang-rae Lee

AA GILL

who they were. Was Edgar's mask sufficient cover for his gnarled old media mug?

They heard mottoes, slurs, and technical terms.

"Vietnam! Love it or leave it!"

"White killers in black tie!"

A young woman stood at the entrance wearing the mask of a child's shattered face, and she said somewhat softly to Edgar, blocking his way and speaking evenly, whispering, in fact, "We'll never disappear, old man, until you're in a landfill with your trash."

Clyde said, "Coming through," like a waiter with a bulky tray, and a couple of minutes later, after a stop in the men's room to collect themselves, the Director and his aide were ready to party. But first Edgar said, "Who were those jaspers?"

"Hecklers, that's all. It's public theatre. We'll find out more and place an informant."

"Did you hear what she said about trash? I think they're connected to the garbage guerrillas."

"Straighten your mask," Clyde said.

"I'd like to see them maimed in the slowest possible manner. Over weeks and months, with voice tapes made."

They walked down the hall to the grand ballroom. They'd walked down five hundred halls on their way to some ceremonial event, some testimonial dinner, one or another ritual salute to Edgar's decades in the Bureau, but they'd never heard a sound as inviting as this.

A subdued roar, a sort of rumble-buzz, with a chandelier jingle in the mix and the dreamy sway of dance music and an element of self-delight—the lure, the enticement of a life defined by its remoteness from the daily drudge of world complaint.

"Tapes of cries and moans," Edgar said, "which I would play to help me sleep."

They moved through the ballroom, they circulated, seeing prominent people everywhere. The room was high and white and primrose gold, flanked by Greek columns that caught the lickety amber light of a thousand candles.

Swan-necked women in textured satin gowns. Masks by Halston, Adolfo, and Saint Laurent. The mother and the sister of one American President and the daughter of another. Crisp little men aswagger with assets. Titled jet-setters, a maharaja and maharani, a Baroness Somebody in a beaded mask. Famous and raging alcoholic poets. Tough smart stylish women who ran fashion books and designed clothes. Hair by Kenneth—teased, swirled, back-combed, and ringleted.

"Did you see?"

"Yes, I did," Edgar said.

"In the dime-store mask."

"Yes, decorated with pearls."

They shook hands here and there, daintily, and dropped a flattering remark to this or that person, and Clyde knew how the Director felt, mixing with people of the rarest social levels, the anointed and predestined, aura'd like Inca kings, but also the talented and the original and the self-made and the born beautiful and the ego-driven and the hard-bargaining, all bearing signs of astral radiance, and the ruthless and brutish as well.

Yes, Edgar was excited.

He stopped to chat with Frank Sinatra and his young actress wife, a nymph in a boy's haircut and a butterfly mask.

"Jedgar, you old warhorse. How long has it been?"

"Far too long, my friend."

"Tempus fugits, don't it, pal?"

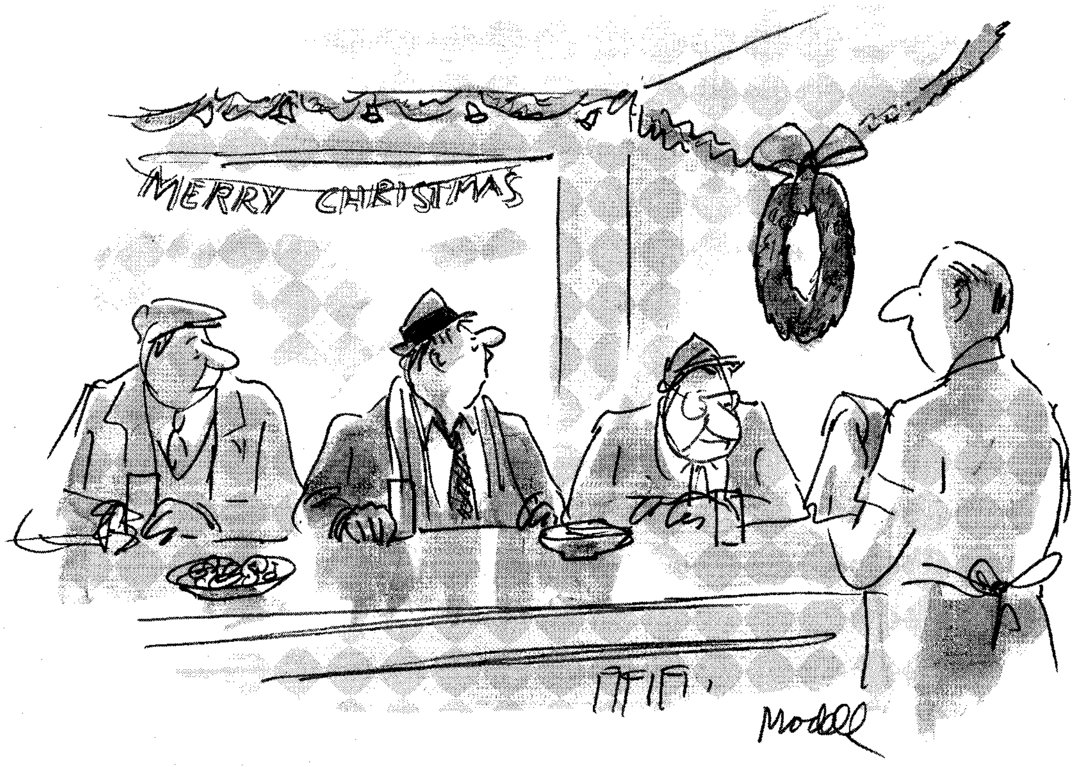
"Introduce me to your lovely bride."

Sinatra was in the files. Many people in the room were in the files. Not a single one of them, Clyde imagined, more accomplished in his occupational strokes than Edgar himself. But Edgar did not carry the glow. Edgar worked in the semidark, manipulating and bringing ruin. He carried the small wan grudging glory of the civil servant. Not the open and confident show, the wide-striding boom of some of these cosmic bravos.

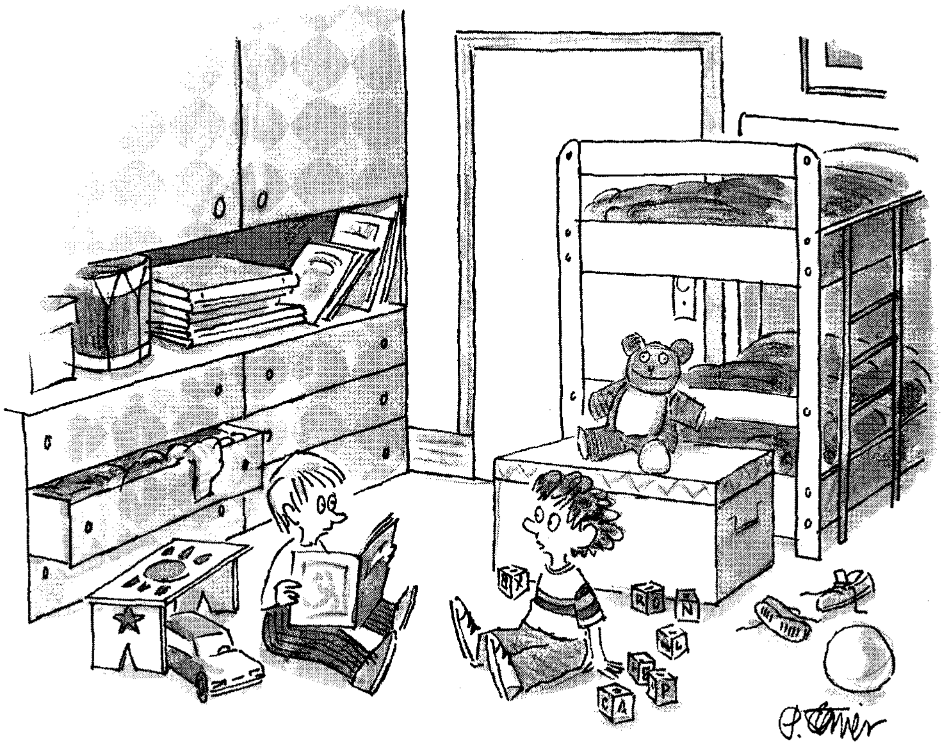
On the stage, under the furled curtain, two bands took turns. A white society band and a black soul group. All musicians masked.

People admired Edgar's leather mask. They told him so. A woman in ostrich feathers ran her tongue over the handlebars. Another woman called him Biker Boy. A gay playwright rolled his eyes.

They found their table and settled in for a spell, sipping champagne and nibbling on buffet tidbits. Clyde uttered the names of people dancing past and Edgar commented on their



"Goodness, if that clock's right I gotta be going!"



"I'm still pre-literate."

• •

lives and careers and personal predilections. Whatever anecdotal lore he failed to recall, Clyde was quick to provide.

Andy Warhol walked by wearing a mask that was a photograph of his own face.

A woman asked Edgar to dance, and he flushed and lit a cigarette.

Lord and Lady Somebody held their masks on sticks.

A woman wore a sexy nun's wimple.

A man wore an executioner's hood.

Edgar spoke rapidly in his old staccato voice, like a radio reporter doing a series of punchy news items. It made Clyde feel good to see the Boss show such animation. They spotted a number of people they knew professionally, Administration faces, past and present, men who held sensitive and critical positions, and Clyde noted how the ballroom seemed to throb with crosscurrent interests and appetites. Political power mingling lubriciously with art and literature. Domed historians clubbing with the beautiful people of society and fashion. There were diplomats dancing with movie stars, and Nobel laureates telling chummy stories to shipping tycoons, and the demimonde of Broadway and the gossip industry hobnobbing with foreign correspondents.

There was a self-conscious sense of some profound moment in the making. A dreadful prospect, Clyde thought, because it suggested a continuation of the Kennedy years. In which well-founded categories began to seem irrelevant. In which a certain fluid movement became possible. In which sex, drugs, and dirty words began to unstratify the culture.

"I think you ought to dance," Edgar said.

Clyde looked at him.

"It's a party. Why not? Find a suitable lady and spin her around the floor."

"I do believe the man is serious."

"Then come back and tell me what you talked about."

"Do I remember a single step?"

"You were quite a good dancer, Junior. Go ahead. Do your stuff. It's a party."

On the floor the guests were doing the twist with all the articulated pantomime of the unfrozen dead come back for a day. Soon the white band re-emerged and the music turned to fox-trots and waltzes. Clyde watched the slowly shuffling mass of careful dancers, barely touching, heedful of hairdos and jewelry and gowns and masks and always on the alert for other fabulous people—heads turning, eyes bright in the great black-and-white gyre.

"Yes, show your true colors," Edgar said with a twisted grin.

So that was it. Tipsy and bitter. All right, thought Clyde. If this was to be a night in which old restrictions were eased, why not a turn around the floor?

He approached a woman not only masked but wholly medieval, it seemed, a cloth wound about the head and a long plain cloak sashed at the waist and a tight bodice girdled high under her breasts.

She smiled at him, and Clyde said, "Shall we?"

She was tall and fair and wore no makeup and spoke without awe of the evening and its trappings. A levelheaded and well-brought-up young lady of the sort that Edgar admired and therefore Clyde as well.

She wore a raven's mask.

Clyde's own mask, an unadorned domino, was in his pocket now.

"Are we using names," he said, "or shall we abide by strict rules of anonymity?"

"Are there rules in effect? I wasn't aware."

"We'll make our own," he said, surprised by the slightly sexy banter he was generating.

He led her in and out of pairs of bodies ghost-floating to the tune of an old ballad from his youth.

Clyde used to have women friends. But when the Boss started to court other possible protégés, strong-bodied young agents who would serve a social function more than a Bureau function, Clyde knew it was time to submit to Edgar's need for a steadfast and unquestioning friend, a mate of soul and word and unvarying routine. This was a choice that answered Clyde's own deep need for protection, a place on the safe side of the fortified wall.

Power made his suits fit better.

He saw Edgar being photographed with a group at the far end of the ballroom. Clyde recognized most of the people and noticed how eager Edgar seemed to nestle among them.

Edgar's own power had always been double-skinned. He had the power of his office, of course. And also the power that his self-repression gave him. His stern measures as director were given an odd legitimacy by his personal life, the rigor of his insistent celibacy. Clyde believed this, that Edgar had earned his monocratic power through the days and nights of his self-denial, the rejection of unacceptable impulses. The man was consistent. Every official secret in the Bureau had its blood birth in Edgar's own soul.

This was what made him a great man.

Conflict. The nature of his desire and the unremitting attempts he made to expose homosexuals in the government. The secret of his desire and the refusal to yield. Great in his conviction. Great in his harsh judgment and traditional background and early-American righteousness and great in his quibbling fear and dark shame and great and sad and miserable in his dread of physical contact and in a thousand other torments too deep to name.

Clyde would have done whatever the Boss required.

Knelt down.

Bent over.

Spread out.

Reached around.

But the Boss wanted only his company and his loyalty down to the last sentient instant of his dying breath.

Clyde saw another man, and another, in executioner's hoods. And a figure in a white winding-sheet.

"And that man over there. Having his picture snapped," the young woman said. "That's the person you were sitting with."

"Mr. Hoover."

"Mr. Hoover, yes."

"And with him, let me see. The wife of a famous poet. The husband of a famous actress. Two unattached composers. A billionaire with a double chin." Clyde realized he was showing off.

"And you are Mr. Tolson," said the woman.

And how clever, thought Clyde, who was rarely recognized in public, and felt a bit flattered, and somewhat unsettled as well.

They were dancing cheek to cheek.

He saw another woman in modified medieval dress, and then a man in a skeleton mask and a woman with a monk's cowl standing on the fringes of the dance floor.

"You know my name," Clyde said, "but I'm at a loss, I'm afraid."

"Which doesn't happen very often, does it? But I thought our rules tended to favor nondisclosure."

They were dancing to show tunes from the forties. She pressed slightly closer and seemed to breathe rhythmically in his ear.

"Have you ever seen so many men gathered in one place," she whispered, "in order to be rich, powerful, and disgusting together? We can look around us, Clyde, and see the business executives, the government officials, the industrialists, the writers, the bankers, the academics, the pig-faced aristocrats in exile, and we can know the soul of one by the bitter wrinkled body of the other and then know all by the soul of the one. Because they're all part of the same motherfucking thing," she whispered. "Don't you think?"

Well, she just about took his breath away, whoever she was.

"The same thing. What thing?" he said.

Lynda Bird Johnson danced past with a Secret Service agent.

"The state, the nation, the corporation, the power structure, the system, the establishment."

So young and lithe and trite. He felt the electric tension of her thighs and breasts passing through his suit.

"If you kiss me," she said, "I'll stick my tongue so far down your throat."

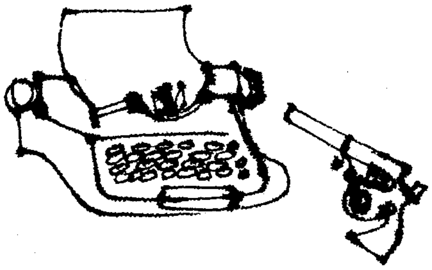
"Yes?"

"It will pierce your heart."

Then everything happened at once. Figures in raven faces and skull masks. Figures in white winding-sheets. Monks, nuns, executioners. And he understood of course that the woman in his arms was one of them.

They formed a death rank on the dance floor, halting the music and sending the guests to the fringes. They commanded the room, a masque of silent figures, a plague, a spray of pathogens, and Clyde looked around for Edgar.

The woman slipped away. Then the figures trooped across the floor, draped, masked, sheeted, and cowled. How had they assembled so deftly? How had they entered the ballroom in the first place?



He looked for Edgar.

An executioner and a nun did a pas de deux, a round of simple circling steps, and then the others gradually joined, the skeleton men and raven women, and in the end it was a graceful pavane they did, courtly and deadly and slow, with gestures so deliberate they seemed acted as well as danced, and Clyde saw his young partner move silkenly in their midst.

I will stick my tongue so far down your throat.

The guests watched in a trance—five hundred and forty men and women by actual count, and musicians and waiters and other personnel, all part of the audience for an entertainment other than themselves—hushed and half stunned.

It will pierce your heart.

When they were finished, the troupe stood in a line and removed their headpieces and masks. Then they opened their mouths, saying nothing, and directed hollow stares at the guests. An extended moment, a long gaping silence in the columned hall.

They departed single file.

A couple of minutes later, Clyde found the Boss and they went to the men's room to collect themselves.

"Enjoy your dance, Junior?"

"Turn around."

"It's all connected. I'm convinced of this. It's all linked in one massive network. The war, the garbage, the promiscuity, the music, the drugs, the hair."

"There's some dandruff on your jacket," Clyde said.

Men entered and left, carrying a post-performance buzz into the tiled room. They unzipped and peed. They urinated into mounds of crushed ice garnished with lemon wedges. They unzipped and zipped. They peed, they waggled, and they zipped.

Clyde blew scaly flakes from the Boss's suit and shirt collar.

Back in the ballroom, half the guests were gone. The rest measured out the time so their departure would not seem influenced by the spectacle, the protest, whatever it was—the mockery of their sleek and precious evening.

The society band played some dance-able numbers but nobody wanted to dance. Edgar sat, drank, and hated. He had the sheen of Last Things in his eye. Clyde knew this look. It meant the Boss was meditating on his coffin. It gave him dark solace, planning the details of his interment. A lead-lined coffin of a thousand pounds plus. To protect his body from worms, germs, moles, voles, and vandals. They were planning to steal his garbage, so why not his corpse? Lead-lined, yes, to keep him safe from nuclear war, from the blast wave, the shock wave, the fallout.

It was after four in the morning when Clyde led the way down the steps to the Cadillac as the spent trash of a day and a night in a great coastal city went wind-skidding through the streets.

Edgar dead, pray God, not for ten, fifteen, twenty years yet.

Maybe the sixties would be over by then.

The armored limousine moved slowly back to the Waldorf. Clyde had let that young woman charm and tempt him, and he'd liked it, and he'd been disappointed when she slipped away before the kiss, and he'd been played for a fool in the oldest, weariest way—that radical calculating heartless self-possessed melon-breasted bitch.

Clyde spotted the bug.

He glanced at Edgar, who sat mute and brooding in his sequinned mask. He'd worn the mask steadily since dinner. A hard man, they said. Cold and laconic. And they made smutty swishy jokes about Edgar and Clyde. But these were not a couple of old queens doddering on. They were men of sovereign authority. And Edgar did not intend to yield control anytime on this earth. This is why he wore the mask—to ease, if only briefly, the burden of control, and maybe to mock, at some level, the painful artifice beneath the shiny leather.

And when Clyde spotted the bug, the poky little Volkswagen with its incandescent doodles and whorls, he decided to say nothing to Edgar. The car was a hundred feet behind them, like a Day-Glo roach, slow and sleepless and clinging.

He said nothing to Edgar because the night had been filled with shock and distress and it was time, finally, for Junior, the life companion and loyal second man, to keep a secret from the Boss. ♦

FOOD

GRITS SOUFFLÉ

AA GILL

To unite the word "grits" with the word "soufflé" is like putting a hat on a donkey. Grits, groats, grout, gruel are Old English words of a granite beauty, strength, and resonance. They tell of hard times, of rural folk, and of orphans starved by lying, fat caretakers in Dickens. Gruel, according to the O.E.D., can also mean punishment. Yet sophisticated chefs such as Lee Bailey and the late Craig Claiborne, both from the South, have given a nod to the grits soufflé while doing their cooking and writing with *haute* assurance on Long Island. For me, the word "grits," with its plebeian ring, in a defiant marriage with the pomp and puff, if it does puff, of a soufflé is the attraction of the dish.

Grits are distressingly bland and tasteless, but, light and airy, they can be souffléed, a process that even the most vivacious whipped egg whites could not accomplish with a mixture of oatmeal and water. The Deep American South is the home of grits; they are scarce in the repertoire of the Upper South of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. Rosalynn Carter in the Carters' parsimonious White House brought a bit of national exposure to Baked Cheese Grits. Sharp—very sharp—cheddar cheese is advised as a companion to the evanescent grits in baked dishes. If there were no cheese, you would be eating air with a bit of salt in it.

On a yellowing sheet of newsprint in a kitchen drawer I find Claiborne discussing grits with red-eye—sometimes called redneck—gravy. For red-eye gravy one needs to fry a piece of *country* ham, stir the leavings, and add black coffee to the pan. Country ham, of the Southern sort, is ham long hung in a smokehouse most likely to be in the back yard. It is the subject of a regional snort of superiority when sent North, perhaps as a Christmas present, only to be thrown out because it is covered with mold, as it rightly will be.

Southerners away from home practice a dip into ethnicity, memory roots, or what might be called a down-scale affectation. The cuisine of the Southern states is rich in possibilities, many with a naming fortitude, such as gumbo, an okra soup. Virgil Thomson, composer, master chef, and a Southerner who spent his adult life at Harvard, in Paris, and, at last, at the Chelsea Hotel, in New York, was called on sometimes to prepare *wilted* lettuce, lettuce dressed with cooked bacon and warm grease from the frying pan. No matter the arterially threatening grease, Thomson lived past ninety. Of course, he was not thin, owing to the wilted lettuce and more refined preparations. He used to visit Montecatini to take the waters in summer, but then "I get it all back by Christmas." —ELIZABETH HARDWICK

LIFE AND LETTERS

THE LIFE AND EARLY DEATH OF BRUCE CHATWIN

He was probably the most imitated writer of his generation. He was Britain's Truman Capote—a literary cult hero whose following keeps growing, even after his death. What accounts for his appeal?

BY SUSANNAH CLAPP

I. THE WRITER AS CONNOISSEUR

In the Villa Mauresque, at Cap Ferrat, on the French Riviera, Somerset Maugham had a collection of paintings by Renoir, Matisse, Picasso, Gauguin, and Toulouse-Lautrec. In his beleaguered old age—alarmed by news that a gang of art thieves was working the Riviera—he decided to sell some of the work. The Somerset Maugham Collection reached Sotheby's in London one afternoon in January, 1962, and was catalogued the next morning. Sotheby's had two cataloguers in its recently formed Impressionist and Modern Art Department. One was Michel Strauss, who was unusual at the auction house at the time—he had done postgraduate research in Impressionists at the Courtauld Institute of Art. The other was Bruce Chatwin.

Chatwin had joined the firm four years before. He did not have a postgraduate degree. He did not have a university degree. He had attended a public school—Marlborough College—but hadn't done well enough to win the scholarship to Oxford that had been dangled in front of him by his masters. His gift was visual: he had a flair for judging works of art. A friend of his father's arranged an introduction for him at the auction house.

The timing was perfect. The late fifties and the sixties were a period of huge expansion for Sotheby's; the lifting of postwar restrictions on the movement of money and goods in and out of Britain, the resulting growth of business abroad, especially in America, and the boom in the price of Impressionist paintings meant that the auction house—which from the time it was founded, in 1744, until the turn of the century had specialized in books—became one of international preëminence.

Chatwin's first job, that of a porter, was lowly, though not as beefy as the title suggests. There wasn't much of the boilersuit about the young men in gray overalls flitting with their costly objects through the labyrinthine corridors of Sotheby's offices. The work mainly involved numbering items and moving them around before sales, but it also provided an informal education in looking at paintings and objects. Before formal instruction was introduced—a works-of-art course, in the seventies, and, later, an intensive bursary scheme for graduates—it was quite usual for school-leavers, more of them male than female, to join Sotheby's at sixteen or eighteen in a fairly modest capacity and to gain promotion within the firm. Chatwin's school friend David Nash, who began as a porter in 1961, went on to form the Impressionist and Modern Art Department in New York three years later.

Chatwin's eye for works of art was remarkable: he'd always had it. ("I don't know *how* I know. I just *know*," he had replied in exasperated bewilderment to his father when looking at antiques with him as a boy.) It soon caused him to be regarded as one of Sotheby's stars. Having "the eye" is sometimes spoken of with quasi-mystical reverence, as Chatwin himself recalled:

> One morning there appeared an elderly and anachronistic gentleman in a black Astrakhan-collared coat, carrying a black silver-tipped cane. His syrupy eyes and brushed-up moustache announced him as a relic of the Ottoman Empire.
>
> "Can you show me something beautiful?" he asked. "Greek, *not* Roman!"
>
> "I think I can," I said.
>
> I showed him a fragment of an Attic white-ground lekythos by the Achilles Painter which had the most refined drawing, in golden-sepia, of a naked boy. It had come from the collection of Lord Elgin.
>
> "Ha!" said the old gentleman. "I see you have The Eye. I too have The Eye. We shall be friends."
>
> He handed me his card. I watched the black coat recede into the gallery:
>
> Paul A—— F—— Bey
> *Grand Chamberlain du Cour du Roi des Albanis.*

For some art experts, having the eye is "like having faith: you can't explain why you have it or how you have it." Others take a more pragmatic view. Michel Strauss, Chatwin's colleague, explains: "You know what an artist's work looks like and the way he uses the brush and the color and the drawing. Really, it's like somebody's handwriting—when you get a letter from somebody in the morning you can recognize who it's from by the writing on the envelope. It's that keen recognition, and some people are very slow and never can learn it. Others have a natural talent."

It was a talent that had a practical—and cashable—use: not only of identifying what was good but of recognizing what was not. Strauss still remembers his and Chatwin's excitement at discovering that two paintings supposedly by Jackson Pollock, sent in for sale shortly after the artist's death, had been produced by a single forger.

The Somerset Maugham sale took place on April 10, 1962.

Chatwin had seen the pictures before they arrived. He had been cast in the role of acolyte and ambassador by Soth-

J. KASMIN

Bruce Chatwin in 1979, at one of the homes he shared with his wife, Elizabeth.

eby's chairman, Peter Wilson, who sometimes used Chatwin to charm clients into buying and selling. In order to secure Maugham's paintings, Chatwin had gone down to the Villa Mauresque—with its marble staircase, its statue of the Chinese goddess of mercy, and its four dachshunds named after characters in Wagner operas—with instructions to delight the wizened author. Peter Wilson told him to be sure to wash his hair.

For a time, Chatwin took some pleasure in being used as bait and as expert. He was "actually almost impossibly good-looking," the art dealer John Kasmin recalls. "You were almost offended by his looks." "You'd flirt with man, woman, or dog," the painter Howard Hodgkin told Chatwin accusingly. "It didn't stop there," Chatwin was said to have responded. But there were those who said that it did. "He's amazing, that boy," one art critic commented. "He keeps so many elderly millionaires on heat and yet he never delivers the goods." What he certainly did deliver was skill.

He went to New York: "On Park Avenue, a woman slammed the door in my face, shouting, 'I'm not showing my Renoir to a sixteen-year-old kid.' " In Paris, he helped to catalogue the diverse collections of Helena Rubinstein, which ranged from twentieth-century European paintings to African art. While staying at the Louisiane—famous for its New Orleans jazz-musician guests—Chatwin is reported to have gone dancing while wearing a live python around his neck. He had an encounter with an elegant aesthete, an early collector of Art Nouveau pieces, who, in the middle of their discussions, pushed his way past a decorated commode and pulled an Egyptian granite head of one of the pharaohs from a cupboard. "Can't you see the similarity?" he asked his guest. "Look at my face! Look at his head!" Chatwin later recalled, "I had to admit there was a remarkable similarity. I also had to admit that the head was a fake."

By the beginning of the sixties, he was attended by chatter about the prodigious feats of his eye. The hazy excitement of this could bewilder. "What *does* happen when Bruce Chatwin looks at a picture?" the writer Francis Wyndham asked before meeting him. "It falls off a wall," someone piped up. By the time he first visited Kasmin to inspect a tiny Indian bronze, Chatwin was well on his way to becoming a wizard. The barely adult expert on antiquities was full of self-confidence and bluff. He took a pin from the lapel of his jacket, scratched the patina of the Indian bronze, and declared that the object was no good.

IN 1966, at the age of twenty-six, Chatwin decided to leave Sotheby's. He had been made a director of the firm and had run two departments—Antiquities and Impressionists. He had established a reputation, and stood to earn a lot of money. He was secure in his position, and had prospects of advancement. But, not for the last time, he bolted.

This was his account of his flight:

> One morning I woke up blind.
>
> During the course of the day, the sight returned to the left eye, but the right one stayed sluggish and clouded. The eye specialist who examined me said there was nothing wrong organically, and diagnosed the nature of the trouble.
>
> "You've been looking too closely at pictures," he said. "Why don't you swap them for some long horizons?"

After this consultation, he said, he took off for the Sudan, and there met nomads bearing shields of elephant hide, discovered a puff adder curled up under his sleeping bag, and learned to read footprints in the sand.

It wasn't quite like that. As so often, Chatwin dramatizes by leaving out links and explanations and by collapsing the time scheme. But, as also so often, his account wasn't as far from the truth as posthumous rumor has suggested. Eyes were at the root of his trouble, and travel was to provide a salve.

II. THE WRITER AS CLAUSTROPHOBIC

BRUCE CHATWIN became an author in his thirties. During his twenties, he had pursued and abandoned two professional courses: after succeeding at Sotheby's and escaping from his success, he went on to study archeology in Edinburgh, but left without taking his degree; interviewed for a French radio program, he described himself as an *archéologue raté*. He travelled widely in Europe, Africa, and Asia, often paying for his trips by selling objects. Throughout his life he eagerly acquired things—an Eskimo toggle, ancient spears, Persian textiles, zoomorphic weights—and then just as eagerly shed them. Eventually, according to Chatwin, Sotheby's added a clause to his contract limiting his private trading. Since he was a schoolboy, Chatwin had kept private notebooks. By the time he was thirty-two, he had started to write for publication. His new career began at the London *Sunday Times Magazine*.

The magazine at the time was buoyant with talent and money. Magnus Linklater was the editor during what he considers this "period of maximum arrogance and maximum independence." Writers and photographers had few budgetary constraints and little editorial interference. The photographer Don McCullin went to Paraguay with the travel writer Norman Lewis and to Cuba with the novelist Edna O'Brien; he went to Bangladesh and Biafra. Chatwin brought stories from Peru, Russia, Paris, India.

In terms of practical arrangements, Chatwin was never an editor's dream. Linklater, who admired and published his pieces, used to experience "a slight sinking of the heart" whenever Chatwin proposed a trip: the cost and the unpredictability of his expeditions—he never phoned in and rarely followed instructions—meant that there was "a slightly nightmare quality about dealing with him," until, that is, he came back with his stories.

In 1974, he travelled with the photographer Eve Arnold to Verrières-les-Buissons to interview the seventy-three-year-old André Malraux. The aging adventurer talked fluently but was very frail: he trembled so much that Arnold couldn't take his picture until he steadied his chin on his hand. For their last story together Chatwin and Arnold went to India to follow Indira Gandhi on the campaign trail. This was how the piece began:

> Mrs. Gandhi's secretary—her Assistant Private Secretary—called to say that she would be driving at four-thirty in the morning to Pantnagar Agricultural University, where the riot police had shot some peasants. Estimates of the number dead varied from thirteen to 400.
>
> "If you want to see Madame in action," he said, "don't throw up the chance."

Chatwin's style achieved its effects by dealing with the exotic and the bizarre in a plain syntax. His sentences are short and stabbing. This is an account of his time with Mrs. Gandhi's daughter-in-law:

> My friend of the afternoon was Sanjay's wife, Menaka—a pretty, freckle-faced girl dressed in scarlet kurta-pyjamas. . . .
>
> "Come on, Brucie," Menaka took my hand. "Come and watch me do my fishwife act!"
>
> She led me to the Children's Park where the PACs had pitched camp.
>
> "Show me your rifles," she screeched at a kind-faced sergeant.
>
> "I can't, Menakaji."
>
> "You showed them when you murdered people. Why can't you show them to me?"
>
> She raised her camera.
>
> "Please, Menakaji, don't photograph me. I have a wife and a mother. We had nothing to do with the killing. It was the 10th Battalion from Meerut."

In 1974, the magazine started preparing a series of articles under the general heading Great American Families. Gore Vidal was to write on the Adamses, V. S. Pritchett on the Vanderbilts, and Peter Conrad on the Roosevelts. Francis Wyndham, the editor in charge of the project, asked Chatwin to write about the Guggenheims. On the eve of Wyndham's departure for New York to oversee the photography for one of the first articles, he talked to Chatwin about the project. The night that Wyndham arrived he went to a party given by the art critic John Richardson and talked to his host about Chatwin. Richardson had hated the Chatwin of his Sotheby's days, whom he considered "power crazy," but on meeting Chatwin later he had begun to like him, and was generously disposed to the news that he had taken to writing, and was writing well. As they talked, the door opened and a bevy of particularly chic New Yorkers swept in. In the midst of them was Chatwin.

Later, over a drink at the Chelsea Hotel, Chatwin—in shorts and rucksack—told Wyndham, as if he had suddenly got the idea, that he was going to go to Patagonia: the southernmost region of South America, straddling both Chile and Argentina, which was thought of by European travellers as the land of the Devil. Some hours later, from a taxi in another part of the city, Wyndham spotted Chatwin "striding down Broadway as if he were literally walking to Patagonia." Wyndham was later to receive a letter from Lima:

> I have done what I threatened. I suddenly got fed up and ran away to South America. . . . I intend to spend Christmas in the middle of Patagonia. I am doing a story there for myself, something I have always wanted to write up. I do not, for obvious reasons, want to be associated with the paper in Argentina, but if something crops up I'll let you or Magnus know. I'm working on something that could be marvellous but I'll have to do it in my own way.

When Chatwin later described his writing life for the New York *Times Book Review*, he said he had sent a telegram to the office: "HAVE GONE TO PATAGONIA." No one can produce evidence that he did so. Magnus Linklater does clearly remember a "sudden revelation" that Bruce was leaving for South America: "Chatwina's off again" was his reaction. A telegram was "an extravagant gesture of the kind one had come to expect from Bruce," but he doesn't recall actually getting one. Telegraphed or not, Chatwin's departure for Patagonia marked the beginning of his life as a writer of books.

III. WELSH AT THE END OF THE EARTH

By the time I met Bruce Chatwin, he had been to Patagonia and had written about what he found there. In doing so, he helped to change the idea of what travel writing could be. The book that he produced—titled in manuscript "At the End: A Journey to Patagonia"—was distinguished by a quality that was to distinguish all his books: a delight in paradox. Even its central subject was a contradiction: the Patagonians were not one nation but a multinational collection of expatriates and exiles, many of whom felt most at home with themselves when they were abroad. "On any one day in Patagonia," Chatwin later recalled, "the traveller could expect to encounter a Welshman, an English gentleman-farmer, a Haight-Ashbury Flower Child, a Montenegrin nationalist, an Afrikaaner, a Persian missionary for the Bahai religion, or the Archdeacon of Buenos Aires on his round of Anglican baptisms."

The typescript was sent to his publishers, Jonathan Cape, in 1976. Chatwin was thirty-six, older than most people who embark on a writing career, but this wasn't his first submission. Seven years earlier, the literary agent Deborah Rogers had sent Cape a copy of a Chatwin essay on nomads. Kasmin, who shared Chatwin's enthusiasm for antiquities and often travelled with him, had introduced

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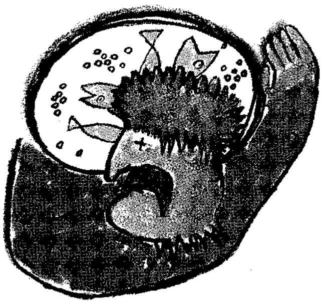
FOOD

INDIGESTION



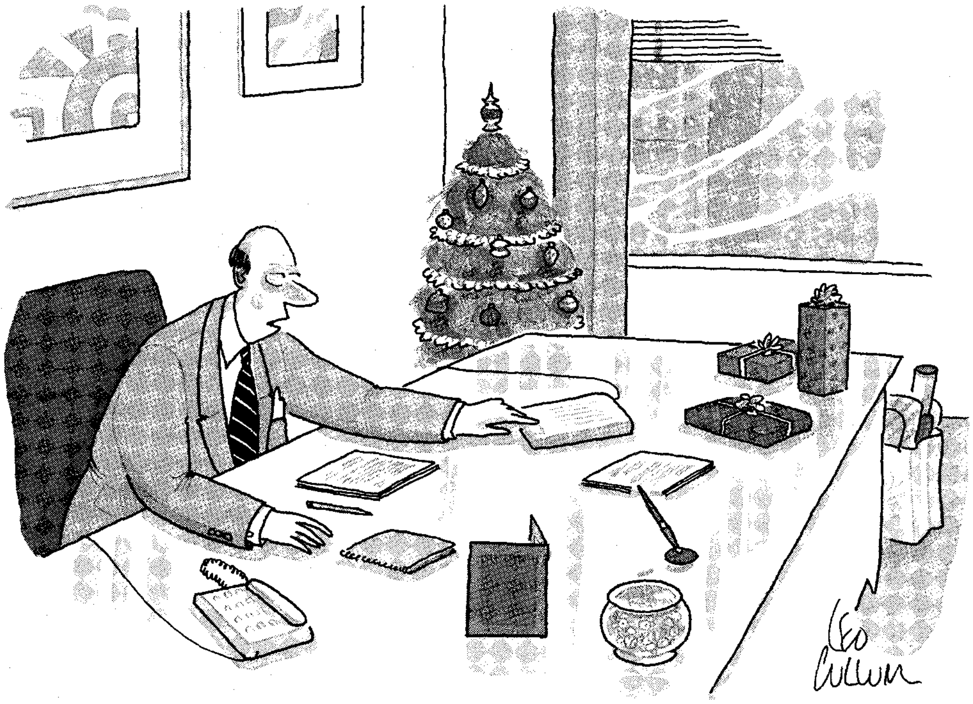
AA GILL

Court Counsellor Semyon Petrovich Podtikin sat down at the table, spread a napkin across his chest, and, quivering with impatience, awaited the moment the blini would appear. Before him, as before a general surveying a battlefield, a vista unfolded: rank upon rank of bottles, from the middle of the table right up to the front line—three types of vodka, Kiev brandy, Château La Rose, Rhine wine, and even a big-bellied flask of priestly Benedictine. Crowding around the liquors in artful disarray were platters of sprats, sardines in hot sauce, sour cream, caviar (at three rubles forty kopecks a pound), fresh salmon, and so on. Podtikin ran his eyes over the food, salivating greedily. His eyes melted like butter; his face oozed with lust.

Frowning, he turned to his wife. "Why is this taking so long? Katya!" he called. "Hurry up!"

Finally, the cook arrived with the blini. At the risk of scorching his fingers, Semyon Petrovich snatched up two of the hottest from the top of the pile and slapped them onto his plate with gusto. The blini were crisp, lacy, and as plump as the shoulders of a merchant's daughter. Podtikin smiled affably, hiccupped with pleasure, and doused the blini in hot butter. Then, as if to tease his appetite, luxuriating in anticipation, he slowly, deliberately heaped them with caviar. He poured sour cream over the places the caviar left bare. Now he had only to eat, right? Wrong! Contemplating his creation, Podtikin was not quite satisfied. After a moment's thought, he topped the blini with the oiliest slice of salmon he could find, and a sprat, *and* a sardine; then, no longer able to hold back, trembling with delight and gasping, he rolled up the two blini, downed a shot of vodka, smacked his lips, opened his mouth—and was struck by an apoplectic fit. —ANTON CHEKHOV

(Translated, from the Russian, by Peter Constantine.)



"It's Christmas, Melanie. Have young Cosgrove go down to the street and give something back to the community."

• •

him to both agent and publisher in the hope of helping him release some of the bees in his bonnet: he thought Chatwin was in danger of becoming an obsessive, dedicated to one all-embracing idea—the idea of human restlessness. The question that preoccupied him was "Why do men wander rather than sit still?"—an answer to which would have supplied an explanation of himself. An agreement was drawn up to publish a book called "The Nomadic Alternative," and a drift of pages accumulated. In 1970, a reader's report gave an equivocal welcome to an early chapter, declaring it "lively-minded" and "contentious" but marred by "wilder digressions" and "outrageous statements." By the time Chatwin handed in his manuscript, he had lost his zeal for what he had written, and author and publisher agreed that the book shouldn't be published.

While those pages have never appeared in print as a unit, their influence is evident in almost all Chatwin's later writings. They were Chatwin's alternative work: a project that was never quite relinquished but never quite realized. Instead, he turned to doing what he did best—describing what he saw and heard, without feeling the need to summon a higher seriousness. He never did this with more snap and sparkle than in "In Patagonia." Nevertheless, the report on that manuscript—by a different reader—was anxious:

> This *is* very extraordinary—and a possible problem. Basically, it's a collage-like collection of impressions, memories, histories and stories about Patagonia, loosely bound together by an intermittent first-person narrative, but mostly functioning more or less autonomously. Accounts of Elizabethan sea-voyages lie side by side with memories of Butch Cassidy; the farms of Welsh Patagonians are meticulously described—as are revolutionary uprisings and the hunting of Indians. A possible source of "The Ancient Mariner" is identified; the Giant Sloth investigated.
>
> The most striking feature of this mixture of fact, fantasy and folklore is the very high quality of the writing. There are pages of outstanding prose—with some lovely pictures. The trouble is that it is very much a page-by-page read: I was impressed by each bit as I read, but didn't feel impelled forward throughout the whole 350-odd pages. Though I think the author would probably feel the massiveness was central to his conception, obviously cutting would help.

I was that reader, and I became the book's editor. Bruce first shot into my office in the late summer of 1976. He was carrying his haversack—in it were a French paperback by Blaise Cendrars, "L'Or: La Merveilleuse Histoire du Général Johann August Suter"; an Oxford World's Classics edition of Sydney Smith's letters; and a manuscript of "In Patagonia"—and he was already talking.

The book was intended to be made up of byways—to slope off, to jump backward and forward in time, to slip from description to speculation, from history to evocation. This was what Chatwin was like in conversation. It was how his mind worked, and it reflected some of the peculiarities of the country he was examining. Patagonia was a region with dark associations. "Since its discovery by Magellan in 1520," Chatwin wrote, "Patagonia was known as a country of black fogs and whirlwinds at the end of the habited world. The word 'Patagonia,' like Mandalay or Timbuctoo, lodged itself in the Western imagination as a metaphor for The Ultimate, the point beyond which one could not go. Indeed, in the opening chapter of 'Moby Dick,' Melville uses 'Patagonian' as an adjective for the outlandish, the monstrous and fatally attractive."

Chatwin once spoke of "In Patagonia" as an attempt to give a "cubist" picture of the place, a description that catches the book's structure and character—its angularity. In the process of being edited, the text became even more angular. What had begun as a big book with a short style ended by being short in every respect: short sentences, short paragraphs, short chapters:

> I left the Río Negro and went on south to Port Madryn.
>
> A hundred and fifty-three Welsh colonists landed here off the brig *Mimosa* in 1865. They were poor people in search of a New Wales, refugees from cramped coal-mining valleys, from a failed independence movement, and from Parliament's ban on Welsh in schools. Their leaders had combed the earth for a stretch of open country uncontaminated by Englishmen. They chose Patagonia for its absolute remoteness and foul climate. . . .
>
> I walked along the esplanade and looked out at the even line of cliffs spreading round the bay. The cliffs were a lighter grey than the grey of the sea and sky. The beach was grey and littered with dead penguins. Halfway along was a concrete monument in memory of the Welsh. It looked like the entrance to a bunker. Let into its sides were

> bronze reliefs representing Barbarism and Civilization. Barbarism showed a group of Tehuelche Indians, naked, with slabby back muscles in the Soviet style. The Welsh were on the side of Civilization—greybeards, young men with scythes, and big-breasted girls with babies.
>
> At dinner the waiter wore white gloves and served a lump of burnt lamb that bounced on the plate. Spread over the restaurant wall was an immense canvas of gauchos herding cattle into an orange sunset. An old-fashioned blonde gave up on the lamb and sat painting her nails. An Indian came in drunk and drank through three jugs of wine. His eyes were glittering slits in the red leather shield of his face. The jugs were of green plastic in the shape of penguins.

"In Patagonia" was Bruce's début and his showcase, touching on subjects and notions that he returned to and expanded through the next twelve years. A book about being abroad and walking abroad, it is structured, as all his books would be, in brief, clear-cut episodes. It crams into a short space a large number of diverse lives, and does so by treating each encounter as if it were a short story, shaping it, giving it a turn or a twist, as in this story of Herman Rauff:

> There is a man in Punta Arenas, dreams pine forests, hums Lieder, wakes each morning and sees the black strait. He drives to a factory that smells of the sea. All about him are scarlet crabs, crawling, then steaming. He hears the shells crack and the claws breaking, sees the sweet white flesh packed firm in metal cans. He is an efficient man, with some previous experience of the production line. Does he remember that other smell, of burning? And that other sound, of low voices singing? And the piles of hair cast away as the claws of crabs?
>
> Herman Rauff is credited with the invention and administration of the Mobile Gas Oven.

The book also glides from fact into fiction—a feature that has not always been appreciated by the Patagonians it describes. Several have complained that they or their friends and relatives, appearing in the book under the easily penetrable disguise of changed names, are nicer or less eccentric than Chatwin made them seem. Another English traveller in Patagonia, John Pilkington, has taken up his pen on their behalf and written a book in which he berates Chatwin for a culpable vivacity, a vivacity purchased at the expense of truth. "I believe Bruce Chatwin knew very well, as he wandered through Patagonia in early 1975, that he was not going to give its residents a fair hearing," Pilkington declares. "Indeed, having met them superficially, he may have been afraid to delve too deeply, suspecting that underneath they might be rather dull."

It is, of course, true that Chatwin exaggerated, that he was selective about details, and that he got things wrong. Nobody reading "In Patagonia" could mistake it for an attempt to give a comprehensive or balanced view of its characters. In fact, Chatwin was discarding some of the travel writer's traditional concerns and bringing to his work the technique of a novelist. This is travel writing that reads like fiction. He leaves out explanations of how he got from one place to another. The voice you hear is elliptical, pungent; and the eye is that of someone clearly drawn to the unexpected, the contradictory, the sharp-edged. There is autobiography but no personal confession. There is reportage *and* history *and* storytelling. This was a new thing—a thing that made travel writing seem more capacious and more incisive. It spawned many imitators and was in the vanguard of a renaissance of travel literature in the eighties: there were new imprints and publishers' lists devoted to the new "genre." For a generation of British writers, "In Patagonia" was one of the most influential books of a decade.

IV. THE WRITER AS HOUSE GUEST

I ONCE met a lord at a party who told me that he knew something about Bruce Chatwin. "The thing is," he murmured confidentially, "he was really a nomad." Chatwin talked fervently about his fascination with nomads: it was a fascination that cast a vagabond lustre over the journeys he made. He made many journeys, but he often stayed comfortably in the houses of friends. "For a nomad," one host commented after an extended Chatwin visit, "he spends an awful lot of time in one place."

The host in question was Teddy Millington-Drake—Edgar Louis Vanderstegen Millington-Drake. He and Chatwin had met when Chatwin was in his early twenties and had become lovers. Large chunks of Chatwin's second book, "The Viceroy of Ouidah," were written at Teddy's house in Tuscany.

Teddy Millington-Drake was eight years older than Chatwin, and was much more contained—physically and verbally. He talked about his friend with the tetchy indulgence of the old lover. He provided a comprehensive guide to the author's limitations as a house guest: he

never switched off a light; he made lengthy transatlantic telephone calls and never quite paid for them; and he was demanding about the furniture in the room where he worked—a remorseless shifter of desks and table lamps. But Chatwin was also "a good friend. Every sort of a friend."

Some hosts groused, others laughed at the small tyrannies of Chatwin's arrangements. He was always looking for the perfect place to work in, always finding it, always becoming disillusioned or alighting on somewhere more desirable. "How I envy you your eyrie in the hills," he wrote from his house in a Gloucestershire valley to a friend living in the Welsh mountains. "This is better than the Welsh Mountains," he declared a few years later, in a letter from Italy to Francis Wyndham: "Bare hills, bright light and most of the English gone back for the winter. I cycle to Siena for groceries and speak to shopkeepers in an incoherent mixture of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin; they smile breezily and ask if I want peanuts."

There was more than one aspect to Chatwin's visitations. He was looked after. And he had a ready audience for his books. On the Greek island of Patmos, where Teddy Millingon-Drake had another house, Chatwin read him a fresh installment of his work each morning. "Did he listen to what you said about it?" Millingon-Drake was asked. "No." In the Usk Valley, in Wales, Chatwin stayed with Diana Melly, the wife of the British jazz entertainer George Melly, and followed her around her kitchen, large yellow pages fluttering, as he acted out a fresh excerpt. "I'm looking forward—very much—to the next chapter," she wrote to him, "read aloud while apple chutney is on the boil."

Being away from his own address—wherever that might be—came to be a condition of his writing. He produced much of his third book, the novel "On the Black Hill," in Wales, but had a breakthrough only when he went to Yaddo, the retreat near Saratoga Springs. When he was living in the beautiful Ozleworth Valley, in Gloucestershire, he said he got so depressed from being enclosed within the hills that he used to bang his head against the wall; the damp air was rotting his chest, the sleepy atmosphere sapping his brain.

Chatwin wrote often about his escapes and adventures, and less often about the anxiety that prompted them. But in "The Viceroy of Ouidah" he produced a saga of constraint and confinement, in which claustrophobia entwined with exoticism. Two continents, two centuries, and a great many terrors are covered in under a hundred and sixty pages.

He had originally set out to write about Francisco Felix de Souza, a slave trader with a Brazilian background, and had made a trip to Dahomey, in West Africa, in 1971. He returned a few years later to collect more material, for what he now saw as a book, but got caught up in an apparent coup, was wrongly arrested as a mercenary, and was imprisoned and threatened: "*Ils vont vous tuer, massacrer même*" ("They're going to kill you, make you into mincemeat even"). Chatwin was to write about his arrest:

> A corporal came in and searched me. He was small, wiry, angular, and his cheekbones shone. He took my watch, wallet, passport and notebook.
>
> "Mercenary!" he said, pointing to the patch-pocket on the leg of my khaki trousers. His gums were spongy and his breath was foul.
>
> "No," I said, submissively. "I'm a tourist."
>
> "Mercenary!" he shrieked, and slapped my face—not hard, but hard enough to hurt.
>
> He held up my fountain-pen. "What?"
> "A pen," I said. It was a black Mont-Blanc.
> "What for?"
> "To write with."
> "A gun?"
> "Not a gun."
> "Yes, a gun!"

Chatwin never wanted to go back to that country. Believing that his research was too insubstantial for a biography, he decided to change the names of the principal characters and create one character out of two real people, and went on to write a work of the imagination.

"The Viceroy of Ouidah" is the most jewelled of Chatwin's books. The paragraphs are tiny. The sentences are short. Clenched and lapidary, every line is heavily freighted. There are rare words and arcane pieces of information. The book is also his most horror-filled: there are knifings, brandings, poisonings, beatings, cholera, pus, and dysentery. The cruelty of his material oppressed him. He left his desk each day washed out, often having found it difficult to produce anything. "In Patagonia" had spilled out of him, full of vagaries and curlicues, fresh starts and false starts; he hadn't found it difficult to expand a point or add a story, nor had he found it difficult to cut. "The Viceroy of Ouidah" was squeezed out sentence by polished sentence: nothing was slapped down; nothing was provisional.

I went to see Bruce at his tiny flat, off Piccadilly, in Albany—his address at the time—to discuss the book. It was a sunny, warm day, and London was noisy, crushed with traffic. Albany stood aloof from all that, like a big, cool ship, and Chatwin's room, perched high up, was sealed off from any town noise or smell. I reached the end of my sermon on his book and half apologetically looked up at him, as he sat on his gray bed against the white wall. He matched his surroundings: he looked drained. Chatwin was usually full of pantomimes, but on this occasion there was no affectation or exaggeration; he was miserable. I remember the grimace he made when he caught my eye, as if to indicate that we had both been discovered taking part in some disreputable prank and would just have to stick together until we'd been punished. Not that the finished book was disreputable: the feeling we shared had to do with the sense of strain involved in the enterprise; with the scabrous subject matter; and with trying to please a worried publisher.

V. MARRIAGE

CHATWIN'S sexual life intrigued people—especially his marriage, with its independent expeditions and its separations. In the summer of 1965, he married Elizabeth Chanler, a young American working at Sotheby's in London as one of Peter Wilson's secretaries.

Small, dark, and independent, Elizabeth had studied history at Harvard, taken courses in Indian art and Rembrandt etchings, and been given a thorough grounding in art history, but she claimed she owed her job at Sotheby's, as most girls did, to qualities of a different order: she knew people in the firm. And her grandfather had a collection: Sotheby's had already sold some of it and wanted the rest.

Chatwin liked to surprise his friends with his marriage, producing information about the event like a conjurer. But there had been nothing impromptu about the wedding itself—a gathering of two hundred guests, and a ceremony, with a Nuptial Mass, in the Chanlers' private chapel, near Rochester, New York. On their wedding trip, the Chatwins sailed along the coast of Maine in a chartered boat. Chatwin, with whom Elizabeth travelled to India, Afghanistan, Persia, and China as well as many parts of the United States and Europe, used to assert that they were happiest as a couple when they were travelling. His widow hasn't stopped: she white-water rafts in Alaska, guides walking tours through the Himalayas, and has travelled through Patagonia in her husband's footsteps.

At Homer End, in Oxfordshire, Elizabeth keeps a flock of black Welsh mountain sheep. Her husband, in one of his embellishing boasts, used to say that on her passport she gave her occupation as "shepherdess": American passports don't require occupations, but, when pressed, "shepherd" is what Elizabeth calls herself. Once, on being asked to describe her husband's domestic habits, she laughed. "Well, you could say he was hardly ever at home."

Chatwin had a number of homosexual friendships, including one with the writer Edmund White. Most of these were ephemeral, but he had a protracted affair with an Australian whom one friend described as the male equivalent of the glamorous blonde on a man's arm, and was reported to have enthused by postcard about making love to him in a tent while a lion roared outside. He declared that he found something "awful" in the idea of two men living together, but after the publication, in 1982, of "On the Black Hill," he considered buying a weekend cottage in Wales and living there with the clothing designer Jasper Conran. He separated from his wife for a time, but he hated the idea of divorce, and, on having come to a judicial arrangement with Elizabeth, he immediately began to see more of her.

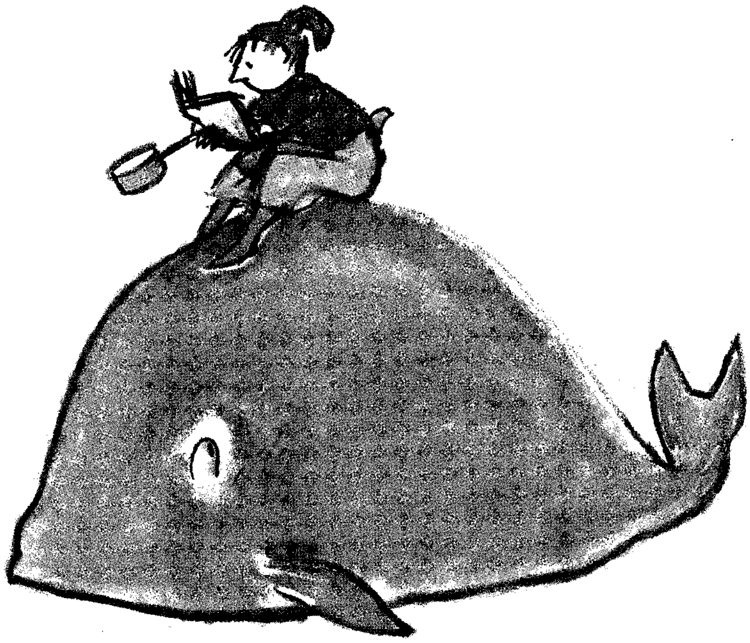
"I don't *know* what feminism *is*," he insisted. But he often behaved as if he did. And he married a woman who, while she paid him a great deal of attention—Chatwin always liked to be mothered—had an independent life, and an independent tongue: at Homer End, there were often two streams of talk, sometimes blending, sometimes clashing, sometimes flowing volubly along side by side.

VI. NOMADS

Nomadism was Chatwin's big theme, but it wasn't until he wrote "The Songlines," published in 1987, that an extended discussion of his preoccupations—which many of his friends expe-

FOOD

WHALE PIE



It was a scuddy, billowy day when I ate the whale. Not the whole whale—I was only four—but enough whale to get the idea of whale's quiddity, to get a mnemonic fix, which persists over forty years, and is ocular and palatal and olfactory. Grace and Edgar, who cooked the whale in a pie the size of a car tire, were my parents' pet bohos. They were arty but artless. They made bad pottery, sold unprovenanced antiques, ran empty cottage restaurants, welshed on debts, specialized in midnight flits from one grand ramshackle house to the next genteelly distressed manor. They rarely paid rent. They often threw parties. The whale-pie party was on the beach at Osmington Mills, in Dorset. We sat on undulating banks of stones. The cliffs were dirty, pocked candlewick spreads, as though southern England's nature were in mimetic thrall to cheap furnished rooms. Edgar wore earsplitting tweeds and a knotted Windsor. Grace's fubsy white arms extended sleevelessly from smocked shoulder to lilac nails. When the two of them lifted the butter muslin from the pie, they did so with dance steps, daft pride. The pastry top was wan: the English can as surely undercook flour as they can overcook meat. Edgar had levelled a shelf of stones. The pie, the pale wheel, sat on it in an enamel baking dish that might have been a chamber pot or a vessel for soaking clothes. It was a stench associable with those functions that was released when Edgar made the first incision. A gust struck me, squatting. The smell was that of cat food, of feces, of bleach. The meat came in gray chunks, mighty dice of eraser rubber. They were set in a dense, opaque paste that might have been petroleum jelly. Whale is as gelatinous as pig. It is also faintly granular, another property it shares with pig that has been long cooked. The meat looked smooth and bereft of fibre. The taste was only vaguely marine. It was the oxymoronish combination of the gelatinous and the granular which rendered it so foully emetic. My wedge was about eight inches long, its share of the pie's circumference perhaps three inches—it was a lot of whale to lose under pebbles. The rest of the party was more candid about its antipathy, although my father, who claimed to have eaten hedgehog and badger, tucked in dutifully, and so did Edgar and Grace's teen-agers, presumably inured to a diet of exotic species. Since then, I've eaten the tripe of kine and sheep, sea slug (a.k.a. *bêche-de-mer*), ox brain, sheep brain, duodenum, pig's ear and trotter, flying fishes' eggs, salmon entrails, testicles, spinal cord, locust, dog. But there is a limit to omnivorous curiosity and carnal abandon—and whale is mine. Not another cubic metre will ever pass my lips. —Jonathan Meades

AA GILL

rienced as the uneasy ghost patrolling his work and conversation—appeared in print. Travelling with him around Australia while he was collecting material, Salman Rushdie began "to think of Bruce's unwritten book as the burden he's been carrying all his writing life. Once he's done this, I think, he'll be free, he'll be able to take flight." There was a sadness for Rushdie in the thought that in Chatwin's final book, the novel "Utz," he "was indeed beginning that new, light-spirited phase of flight. 'Utz' is all we have of what had become possible for him once his Australian odyssey helped him express the ideas which he'd carried about for so many years."

Chatwin had found in the Australian Aboriginal myth of creation an incandescent image that served to illumine concerns of his own. His exposition of the myth is graphic. In the Dreamtime (the equivalent of the period covered by Genesis), the minerals, animals, and vegetation of Australia were summoned into existence by song: legendary beings known as the Ancestors roamed over the continent singing out "the name of everything that crossed their path—birds, animals, plants, rocks, waterholes." They sang the land into being. In doing so they left "songlines," invisible trails of words and musical notes—"a spaghetti of Iliads and Odysseys, writhing this way and that."

This account of the myth is stirring and elegant. It also leaves things unsaid. Chatwin's rendering provides a version of the writer bringing his world to life, and of a human being re-creating his own history. It is a legend that celebrates walking. It celebrates the desert landscape. And it suggests that it is more natural to move than to settle. These were articles of faith for Chatwin.

Chatwin wasn't a pioneer: he was an inventive and adventurous traveller. But he broached new ground in his descriptions of expeditions, making other people see places for the first time. "The Songlines" benefits from the vigor of these descriptions: of a priest who lives in a corrugated-iron hermitage; of expanses of spinifex and dust and red rock; of the Aborigines' interpretation of their land in paintings. The book is arranged with some ingenuity to express Chatwin's own mythology. This story about journeys is in the form of a journey. This tale of songlines encloses what some friends have thought of as Bruce's own songline.

But "The Songlines" creaks when it attempts to make large statements. There was always a thin line between Chatwin being brilliant and Chatwin being batty, and some of the passages in the notebooks—extracts from which are included in the book—show him at his wildest. He claims that patterns of dominance and hierarchical structures come with settlement, that the savanna is the birthplace and true home of the human race. He proposes that human beings are sanest and happiest when they are on the move:

> As a general rule of biology, migratory species are less "aggressive" than sedentary ones.
>
> There is one obvious reason why this should be so. The migration itself, like the pilgrimage, is the hard journey: a "leveller" on which the "fit" survive and stragglers fall by the wayside.
>
> The journey thus pre-empts the need for hierarchies and shows of dominance.

Chatwin's larger statements—continent-spanning, epoch-hopping—have the ring of conversations held at midnight.

With Chatwin it was always midnight. What he gave, with his whirling eloquence, was a performance, but a peculiarly unguarded one, like that of a child.

VII. CHINESE BATS

In the early nineteen-eighties, Chatwin, leafing through a copy of *Time*, came across a piece that talked about "the gay plague." He told his wife later that he had thought it applied to him, but he wasn't diagnosed as H.I.V.-positive for another four years. A letter he wrote later to the novelist Shirley Hazzard gives some sense of his state of mind and of his physical frailty:

> 1986 I'm glad to see the back of. Last winter, when we went to Yunnan, I must have picked up, by inhaling it in the dust, a fungus which first attacks the lungs, then gets into the bloodstream, then lodges itself in the bone marrow, where it prevents the making of red blood corpuscles. There are ten cases of this particular blight on record: all Chinese peasants (from Western China, where we were), all fatal. All last summer I was being treated for ever worsening attacks of asthma, and it was suggested I go into the clean mountain air of Switzerland in the hope of a cure. When, on my first morning in Zurich, I could hardly walk across the hotel bedroom, there was obviously something seriously wrong. The amazing thing was that, the day before leaving England, I handed in my Australian opus (I hadn't really noticed I was ill) and then the whirlwind struck. The Swiss doctors, though excellent, failed to find the cause. I was brought back to Oxford, to a crack team of young specialists who are expert in tropical or exotic ailments. They did not, admittedly, think I'd last the night. After five days, of wild, behind-the-scenes activity, they nailed what kind of Penicillium it was: I might add that the only other case, apart from the peasants, was that found in the corpse of a killer-whale cast up on the shores of Arabia. So when, in the fog of my delirium, the chief doctor asked me, "Have you been consorting with Chinese peasants or killer-whales?" I was able to whisper feebly, "Peasants."

Chatwin had his own way of both concealing and declaring what was wrong with him. He didn't like people challenging him about his illness, but he summoned some close friends to tell them that he had AIDS. To most people he spoke about a malady caused by Chinese eggs, a malady that did exist: he had developed a fungus thought to have been caused either by eating a black egg in Lijiang or by a visit to the Hong Kong bird market. He also spoke about a disorder caused by bats in caves, and about arranging an expedition to Africa to find a stable form of H.I.V.: the Aga Khan was to be approached for funding. He said he wanted to write a book called "Sons of Thunder," which was to be about the search for the AIDS virus. He meant to involve doctors from the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford and to expand the topic into an examination of healers. He spoke about setting up a research unit in Oxford and of being made a don himself.

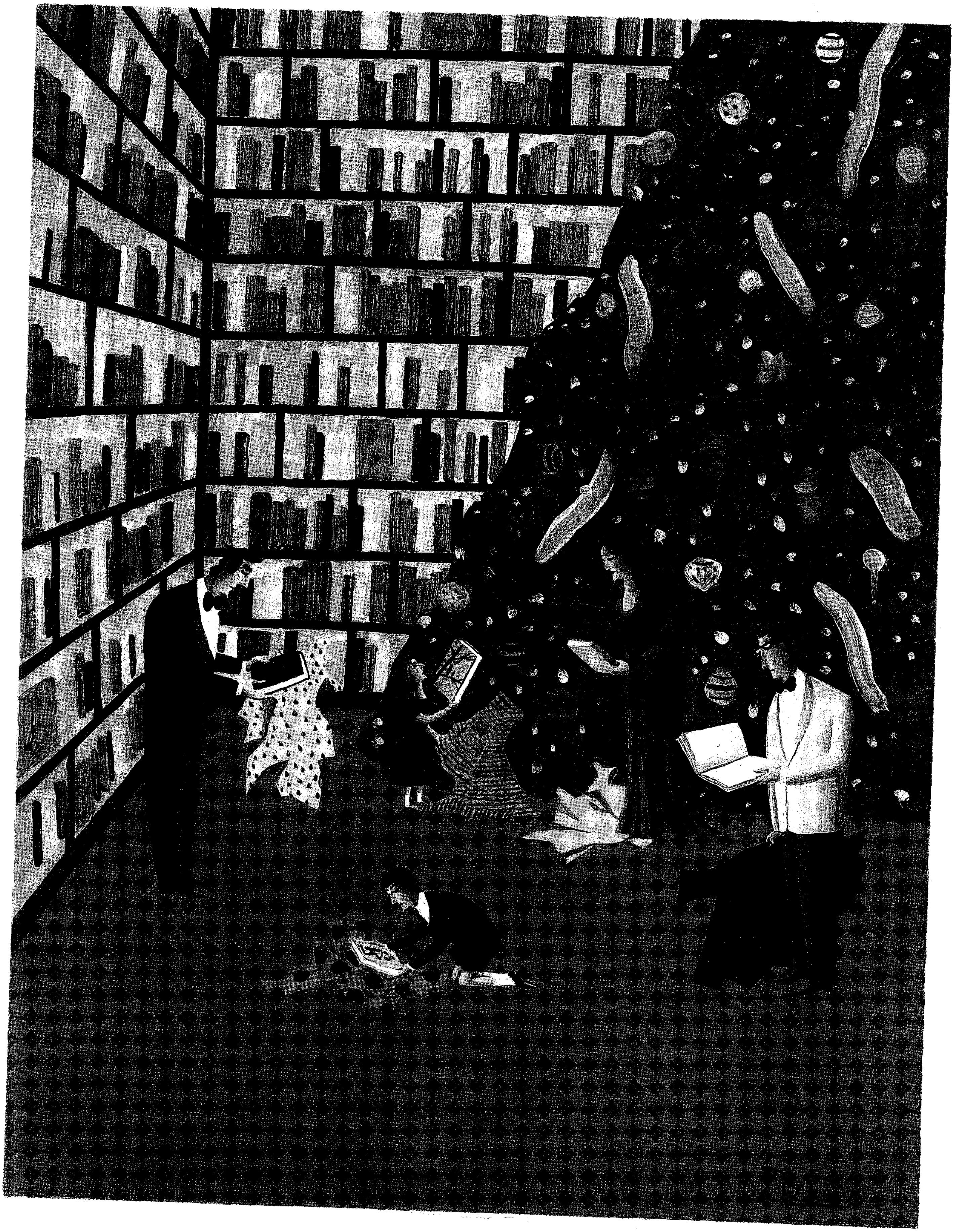
VIII. ACCELERATED CHATWIN

In the last years of his life, Chatwin, intermittently feverish and sometimes high on prescription drugs, appeared as hyper-Bruce, an exaggerated, speeded-up version of his already emphatic self. He was given to excited speeches, to big, generous gestures and ambitious plans. His fluency and intensity were hypnotic, and it wasn't always easy to know when he was deluded. His eyes grew bulbous as his face shrank; he was fragile but aflame. His obsessions were the same obsessions that he had had all his life, heightened and more grandiloquent. But he became, if anything, sweeter in character, gentler, more likely to praise and to help people.

He had an idea for a one-act ballet to be called "The Knife-Grinder," and he liked to mime it by striking a stat-

SKETCHBOOK BY BENOÎT VAN INNIS

SURPRISE GIFTS



uesque pose in front of a mangle and rippling his muscles: the ballet was, naturally, to be performed at the Met. He meant to walk the border between East and West Berlin. He was intrigued by the idea of a series of pieces about boundaries. He made plans for researching a novel about the inhabitants of a South African dorp. He had an idea for a play. He had ideas for more than one opera.

There were unscheduled arrivals, long and excited conversations. He appeared at a barn dance in Wiltshire in a wheelchair, his eyes gleaming beneath a bush hat. He whizzed around London in this chair, looking for friends to take him in: he had a way of making cabdrivers do what he wanted—"a mixture of charm and command," according to Kasmin—but some people found his wildness and frailty alarming and wouldn't put him up.

He rang me one day at my office and asked if I could join him—immediately—for coffee in his room at the Ritz. I couldn't, but not long after I did attend a picnic at the Rebecca Hossack Gallery, on Windmill Street. He was in his wheelchair. His thin legs dangled, and as Elizabeth propelled him over the threshold one of his shoes fell off; when I pushed it back on, it sat like a boat around his skinny ankle. The gallery, which specialized in Aboriginal art, was showing large, fondant-colored canvases: he praised them and talked of buying several. On the pavement outside was a wooden garden table, and on it Elizabeth set up lunch—bread and pâté and greengages, which she cut into small pieces for her husband with a Swiss Army knife. He stayed in the open air for only a short time: as soon as a tepid August sun came out from behind the clouds, he felt it beating on his head; his hair was thin and lank.

D. Reilly

"As a matter of fact, I confess to modest hopes—not wildly unfounded, I trust—that my book may resonate beyond the reaches of academe."

He told me to spend five hundred pounds of his money on a painting for myself and to spend the same on a picture for Francis Wyndham—offers that I didn't pursue. Bruce had always been generous, but when he was ill he wanted to give presents to everyone all the time. Wyndham was presented with a first edition of Flaubert's "Trois Contes," stamped with Chatwin's name in Mandarin. The musician Kevin Volans, who stayed for some time at Homer End, composing a string quartet, was given an upright piano and a sixteenth-century Japanese lacquer box. The London art dealer Christopher Gibbs was given a turquoise Egyptian gaming piece, one of Bruce's talismans.

Collecting became another obsessive pastime: the Chatwin Collection, made up of objects to leave to Elizabeth, was one of his most passionate pursuits in the last year of his life. The items he acquired for it were the same sorts of object that had always interested him. He went on frantic shopping sprees. Pushed through Bond Street by Kevin Volans, his valuable purchases swinging in plastic bags on the wheelchair as they progressed through pouring rain, he paused in each gallery only long enough to pronounce, "I'll have that, that, and that." Volans remembers his buying a piece of the Red Fort with an inlaid flower pattern; some prehistoric ceremonial adzes; and a piece of calligraphy in praise of Allah which was somehow connected to Tamburlaine. Anything he brought back to Homer End was very carefully positioned: Christopher Gibbs rushed up and downstairs with a Celtic head in an attempt to get the sun to shine on the right profile. Chatwin said that he intended to open an extension to the National Gallery, which he would fill with coracles and clothes. He bought a number of designer outfits—Fortuny dresses, Balenciaga costumes—which he wanted to give to Jasper Conran. He told taxidrivers he was rich, and announced to store owners, "I'm going to be one of your major customers." What he spent bore little relation to the money he had. He explained to George Melly, "God is filling up my bank account all the time." "That's all right, then," Melly said, while Elizabeth and his friends busied themselves with cancelling checks and returning objects to dealers.

He moved into London hotels for

brief stays. At the Portobello, in Notting Hill Gate, Francis Wyndham found "what could only be called a merchant" at Chatwin's bedside, delving into a pouch from which jewels came tumbling out and got lost in the blankets; the archeologist and collector Robert Erskine also visited him at the Portobello, and found him exclaiming with wonder over undistinguished objects. At the Ritz ("I must say it's frightfully reasonable," Chatwin announced as he made out his check), Kevin Volans tried to restrain some of his excursions from his room, at one point advising: "No pee bottles in the Ritz dining room." Unfazed, Bruce came up with a solution: "We'll take my shawl." He entertained there like—as he put it—"some *comtesse*," firing off telephone calls, summoning more art dealers with goods for him to examine.

IX. NOMAD OR COLLECTOR?

IN the middle of these tumults, Chatwin produced his most intricately structured book, "Utz," the tale of a collector of Meissen porcelain in Communist Prague. He was writing "Utz" while preparing for his big Russian novel, and the evocation of Eastern Europe, at once dingy and dignified, is one of the best things in the book. This story about miniatures is itself a miniature—short and elliptical, sometimes to the point of archness. It contains scarcely any physical description of Prague, but the austerity and the calm of the city are strongly registered. As a train carries Utz across the Czechoslovakian border into Germany, he watches a greedy girl peel an orange and sees the juice drip "over the monster's fingers." The smell of the rind that fills the compartment seems to Utz to be the smell of the West.

At the center of the novel is a study of the compulsive collector. "The collector" was another of Chatwin's big categories, the opposite of the nomad, the kind of person that—he declared every now and then—it was important to stop being. As so often in his writing, the vivacity is not in the big idea but in its offshoots and tangents. The excitement of Utz's collecting is in the lengths to which he goes to procure his objects: his tricks and subterfuges, the smuggling across frontiers, the wrangling with a porcelain dealer, the accommodations he makes with the Czech authorities.

"Utz" is a sequence of secrets, surprises, and mysteries, most of them unsolved. There are the secrets of porcelain manufacture, the secret of the golem, the mystery of what happens to Utz's collection. And there are the surprises of the collector's sexual life.

While Chatwin was putting the finishing touches on "Utz," in January of 1987, he was still mobile and energetic. He phoned me when he had completed the first draft of the book and asked me if I would edit it.

The adjustments made to the manuscript were tiny: a question of trimming and tucking. One cold, bright morning, we worked for hours without a break, each with a copy of the manuscript, reading over every sentence; as I paused before making a point, he anticipated my quibble with a triumphant beam: "Beat you." Halfway through lunch—spaghetti and bacon in the kitchen—he suddenly went completely blue in the face. He got a blanket to wrap around himself; huddled up, he looked about ten years old. "I'm a child of the tropics," he wailed.

A couple of days later, he said he had a cold. When I went down to Homer End the following weekend, he was more noticeably afflicted. "My stomach is like a calabash," he proclaimed, drumming rather proudly on his swollen middle. He also talked more plaintively, in the manner of a forlorn infant, about his ailments. He had a cough, and his feet were numb; when we went for a walk with Elizabeth, he moved stiffly, like a tin man, negotiating brambles with difficulty and needing help to climb over a fence. At suppertime, he asked for milk, and Elizabeth bent over him, trying to tempt him with pears in chocolate sauce.

When I visited him two months later, at the end of April, he was in bed, thin and subdued but volatile. He wanted to show me a photograph, and got up to look for it: as he moved, his pajama trousers slipped off his tiny back and bottom. He couldn't find the picture, and began to cry. Elizabeth was summoned from the kitchen to help, and they both rustled through various boxes stuffed full of papers, one of them labelled "Nice Letters."

"It'll turn up," Elizabeth consoled.

"You always say that," he sobbed. Then he suddenly became calm, and said, "It doesn't matter."

Bruce Chatwin died in the South of France. He had been staying for the last months of 1988 with Elizabeth in Shirley Conran's house, near Grasse: whenever his bed was wheeled onto the terrace, he wore, his hostess recalls, "a little hat like the ones you give to premature babies." Kevin Volans was also staying there, and on Saturday, January 14th, George and Diana Melly arrived, with Francis Wyndham, for the weekend. Elizabeth had been hoping that they would be able to accompany her and Bruce back to England. A bed had been found for him in the London Lighthouse, a hospice for people with AIDS, but it wasn't clear that an airline would agree to fly him across the Channel. In any case, he was becoming too weak to travel.

He spoke very little that weekend, and when food was put in his mouth it just lay on his tongue. He said, "You're hurting me" when someone touched him; he said he was frightened of a face that kept appearing to him; his eyes were open even when he was asleep; he had spells of groaning. A doctor came from Grasse to examine him; a homeopathic practitioner from Devon was also in attendance. Elizabeth had gathered bunches of jasmine for Bruce, and an orchid was placed in his room. His friends took turns sitting with him.

On Sunday morning, he was taken, sleeping peacefully, out onto the terrace to lie in the sun. An anxious amount of food was prepared during that Sunday. Elizabeth cooked fish pie for the vegetarians, stew for the meat-eaters, soup and a coddled egg for Bruce. Shirley Conran ordered dishes to be sent up from the local restaurant. A Christmas pudding, which had been put on to steam, boiled dry and burned the saucepan.

In the small hours of Monday morning, Bruce got worse: lying beside him in bed, Elizabeth heard the sound of his breathing change, and telephoned for an ambulance; at half past three, he was carried on a stretcher down a long flight of stairs from the house. He died in Nice two days later, aged forty-eight, on Wednesday, January 18, 1989. ♦

FICTION

THE LOVE OF A GOOD WOMAN

A murder, a mystery, a romance.

BY ALICE MUNRO

FOR the last couple of decades, there has been a museum in Walley, dedicated to preserving photos and butter churns and horse harnesses and an old dentist's chair and a cumbersome apple peeler and such curiosities as the pretty little porcelain-and-glass insulators that were used on telegraph poles.

Also there is a red box, which has the letters "D. M. Willens, Optometrist," printed on it, and a note beside it, saying, "This box of optometrist's instruments though not very old has considerable local significance, since it belonged to Mr. D. M. Willens, who drowned in the Peregrine River, 1951. It escaped the catastrophe and was found, presumably by the anonymous donor, who dispatched it to be a feature of our collection."

The ophthalmoscope could make you think of a snowman. The top part, that is—the part that's fastened onto the hollow handle. A large disk, with a smaller disk on top. In the large disk a hole to look through, as the various lenses are moved. The handle is heavy because the batteries are still inside. If you took the batteries out and put in the rod that is provided, with a disk on either end, you could plug in an electric cord. But it might have been necessary to use the instrument in places where there wasn't any electricity.

The retinoscope looks more complicated. Underneath the round forehead clamp is something like an elf's head, with a round flat face and a pointed metal cap. This is tilted at a forty-five-degree angle to a slim column, and out of the top of the column a tiny light is supposed to shine. The flat face is made of glass and is a dark sort of mirror.

Everything is black, but that is only paint. In some places where the optometrist's hand must have rubbed most often, the paint has disappeared and you can see a patch of shiny silver metal.

I. JUTLAND

THIS place was called Jutland. There had been a mill once, and some kind of small settlement, but that had all gone by the end of the last century, and the place had never amounted to much at any time. Many people believed that it had been named in honor of the famous sea battle fought during the First World War, but actually everything had been in ruins years before that battle ever took place.

The three boys who came out here on a Saturday morning early in the spring of 1951 believed, as most children did, that the name came from the old wooden planks that jutted out of the earth of the riverbank and from the other straight thick boards that stood up in the nearby water, making an uneven palisade. (These were in fact the remains of a dam, built before the days of cement.) The planks and a heap of foundation stones and a lilac bush and some huge apple trees deformed by black knot and the shallow ditch of the millrace that filled up with nettles every summer were the only other signs of what had been here before.

There was a road, or a track, coming back from the township road, but it had never been gravelled, and appeared on the maps only as a dotted line, a road allowance. It was used quite a bit in the summer by people driving to the river to swim or at night by couples looking for a place to park. The turnaround spot came before you got to the ditch, but the whole area was so overrun by nettles, and cow parsnip, and woody wild hemlock in a wet year, that cars would sometimes have to back out all the way to the proper road.

The car tracks to the water's edge on that spring morning were easy to spot but were not taken notice of by these boys, who were thinking only about swimming. At least, they would call it swimming; they would go back to town and say that they had been swimming at Jutland before the snow was off the ground.

It was colder here upstream than on the river flats close to the town. There was not a leaf out yet on the riverbank trees—the only green you saw was from patches of leeks on the ground and marsh marigolds fresh as spinach, spread along any little stream that gullied its way down to the river. And on the opposite bank under some cedars they saw what they were especially looking for—a long, low, stubborn snowbank, gray as stones.

Not off the ground.

So they would jump into the water and feel the cold hit them like ice daggers. Ice daggers shooting up behind their eyes and jabbing the tops of their skulls from the inside. Then they would move their arms and legs a few times and haul themselves out, quaking and letting their teeth rattle; they would push their numb limbs into their clothes and feel the painful recapture of their bodies by their startled blood and the relief of making their brag true.

The tracks that they didn't notice came right through the ditch—in which there was nothing growing now, there was only the flat dead straw-colored grass of the year before. Through the ditch and into the river without trying to turn around. The boys tramped over them. But by this time they were close enough to the water to have had their attention caught by something more extraordinary than car tracks.

There was a pale-blue shine to the water that was not a reflection of sky. It was a whole car, down in the pond on a slant, the front wheels and the nose of it poking into the mud on the bottom, and the bump of the trunk nearly breaking the surface. Light blue was in those days an unusual color for a car, and its bulgy shape was unusual, too. They knew it right away. The little English car, the Austin, the only one of its kind surely in the whole county. It belonged to Mr.

"TREADWELL"/HOUK FRIEDMAN GALLERY

She had what she thought of as romantic dreams, in which some man would have his arm around her or even be embracing her, but they were nothing, nothing at all compared with the dreams that she was having now. Photograph by Andrea Modica.

Willens, the optometrist. He looked like a cartoon character when he drove it, because he was a short but thick man, with heavy shoulders and a large head. He always seemed to be crammed into his little car as if it were a bursting suit of clothes.

The car had a panel in its roof, which Mr. Willens opened in warm weather. It was open now. They could not see very well what was inside. The color of the car made its shape plain in the water, but the water was really not very clear, and it obscured what was not so bright. The boys squatted down on the bank, then lay on their stomachs and pushed their heads out like turtles, trying to see. There was something dark and furry, something like a big animal tail, pushed up through the hole in the roof and moving idly in the water. This was shortly seen to be an arm, covered by the sleeve of a dark jacket of some heavy and hairy material. It seemed that inside the car a man's body—it had to be the body of Mr. Willens—had got into a peculiar position. The force of the water—for even in the millpond there was a good deal of force in the water at this time of year—must have somehow lifted him from the seat and pushed him about, so that one shoulder was up near the car roof and one arm had got free. His head must have been shoved down against the driver's door and window. One front wheel was stuck deeper in the river bottom than the other, which meant that the car was on a slant from side to side as well as back to front. The window in fact must be open and the head sticking out for the body to be lodged in that position. But they could not get to see that. They could picture Mr. Willens's face as they knew it—a big square face, which often wore a theatrical sort of frown but was never seriously intimidating. His thin crinkly hair was reddish or brassy on top, and combed diagonally over his forehead. His eyebrows were darker than his hair, thick and fuzzy like caterpillars stuck above his eyes. This was a face already grotesque to them, in the way that many adult faces were, and they were not afraid to see it drowned. But all they got to see was that arm and his pale hand. They could see the hand quite plain once they got used to looking through the water. It rode there tremulously and irresolutely, like a feather, though it looked as solid as dough. And as ordinary, once you got used to its being there at all. The fingernails were all like neat little faces, with their intelligent everyday look of greeting, their sensible disowning of their circumstances.

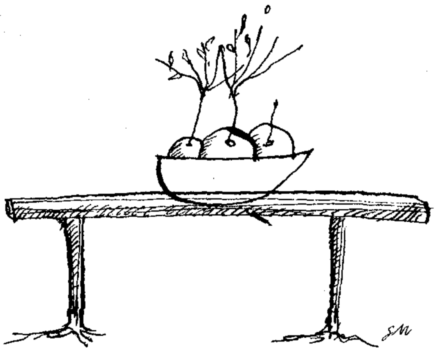
"Son of a gun," these boys said. With gathering energy and a tone of deepening respect, even of gratitude. "*Son of a gun.*"

It was their first time out this year. First, they had come across the bridge over the Peregrine River, the single-lane double-span bridge known locally as Hell's Gate or the Death Trap—though the danger had really more to do with the sharp turn the road took at the south end of it than with the bridge itself.

There was a regular walkway for pedestrians, but they didn't use it. They never remembered using it. Perhaps years ago, when they were so young as to be held by the hand. But that time had vanished for them; they refused to recognize it even if they were shown the evidence in snapshots or forced to listen to it in family conversation.

They walked now along the iron shelf that ran on the opposite side of the bridge from the walkway. It was about eight inches wide and a foot or so above the bridge floor. The Peregrine River was rushing the winter load of ice and snow, now melted, out into Lake Huron. It was barely back within its banks after the yearly flood that turned the flats into a lake and tore out the young trees and bashed any boat or hut within its reach. With the runoff from the fields muddying the water and the pale sunlight on its surface, the water looked like butterscotch pudding on the boil. But if you fell into it it would freeze your blood and fling you out into the lake, if it didn't brain you against the buttresses first.

Cars honked at them—a warning or a reproof—but they paid no attention. They proceeded single file, as self-possessed as sleepwalkers. Then, at the north end of the bridge, they cut down to the flats, locating the paths they remembered from the year before. The flood had been so recent that these paths were not easy to follow. You had to kick your way through beaten-down brush and jump from one hummock of mud-plastered grass to another. Sometimes they jumped carelessly and landed in mud or pools of leftover floodwater, and once their feet were wet they gave up caring where they landed. They squelched through the mud and splashed in the pools so that the water came in over the tops of their rubber boots. The wind was warm; it was pulling the clouds apart into threads of old wool, and the gulls and crows were quarrelling and diving over the river. Buzzards were circling over them, on the high lookout; the robins had just returned, and the red-winged blackbirds were darting in pairs, striking bright on your eyes as if they had been dipped in paint.



"Should've brought a twenty-two."

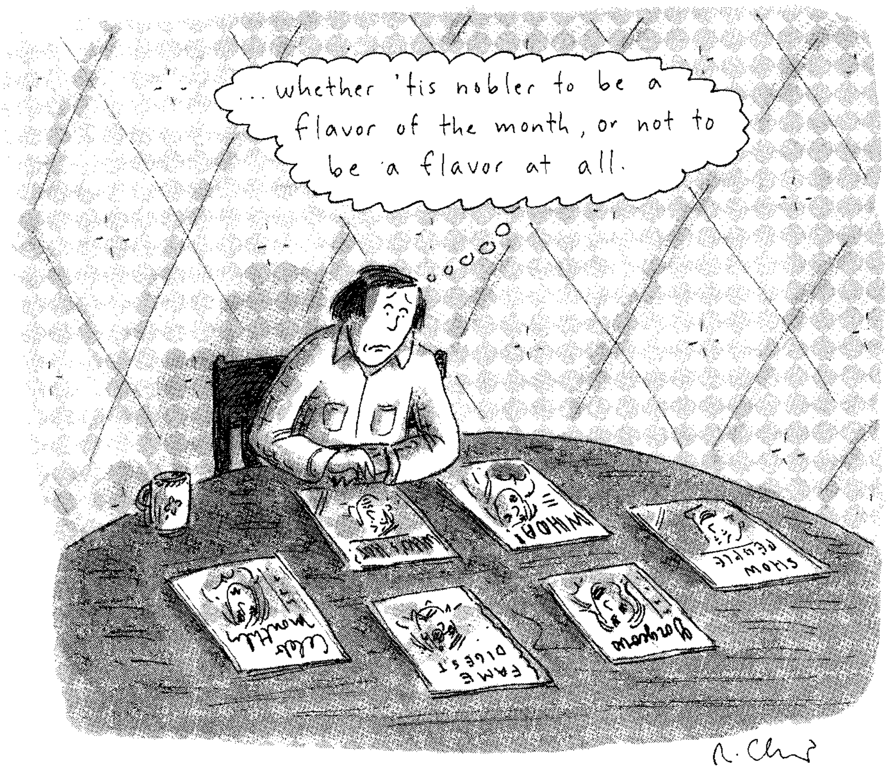
"Should've brought a twelve-gauge."

They were too old to raise sticks and make shooting noises. They spoke with casual regret, as if guns were readily available to them.

They climbed up the north banks to a place where there was bare sand. Turtles were supposed to lay their eggs in this sand. It was too early yet for that to happen, and in fact the story of turtle eggs dated from years back—none of these boys had ever seen any. But they kicked and stomped the sand, just in case. Then they looked around for the place where last year one of them, in company with another boy, had found a cow's hipbone, carried off by the flood from some slaughter pile. The river could be counted on every year to sweep off and deposit elsewhere a good number of surprising or cumbersome or bizarre or homely objects. Rolls of wire, an intact set of steps, a bent shovel, a corn kettle. The hipbone had been found caught on the branch of a sumac—which seemed proper, because all those smooth branches were like cow horns or deer antlers, some with rusty cone tips. They crashed around for some time—Cece Ferns showed them the exact branch—but they found nothing.

It was Cece Ferns and Ralph Diller who had made that find, and when asked where it was at present Cece Ferns said, "Ralph took it." The two boys who were with him now—Jimmy Box and Bud Salter—knew why that would have to be. Cece could never take anything home unless it was of a size to be easily concealed from his father.

HAMLET'S GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GRANDSON CONTEMPLATES SHOW BUSINESS


. . . whether 'tis nobler to be a flavor of the month, or not to be a flavor at all.
WHOA!
SHOW PEOPLE
Celeb Monthly
FAME DIGEST
Gorgeous

• •

They talked of more useful finds that might be made or had been made in past years. Fence rails could be used to build a raft, pieces of stray lumber could be collected for a planned shack or boat. Real luck would be to get hold of some loose muskrat traps. Then you could go into business. You could pick up enough lumber for stretching boards and steal the knives for skinning. They spoke of taking over an empty shed they knew of, in the blind alley behind what used to be the livery barn. There was a padlock on it, but you could probably get in through the window, taking the boards off it at night and replacing them at daybreak. You could take a flashlight to work by. No—a lantern. You could skin the muskrats and stretch the pelts and sell them for a lot of money.

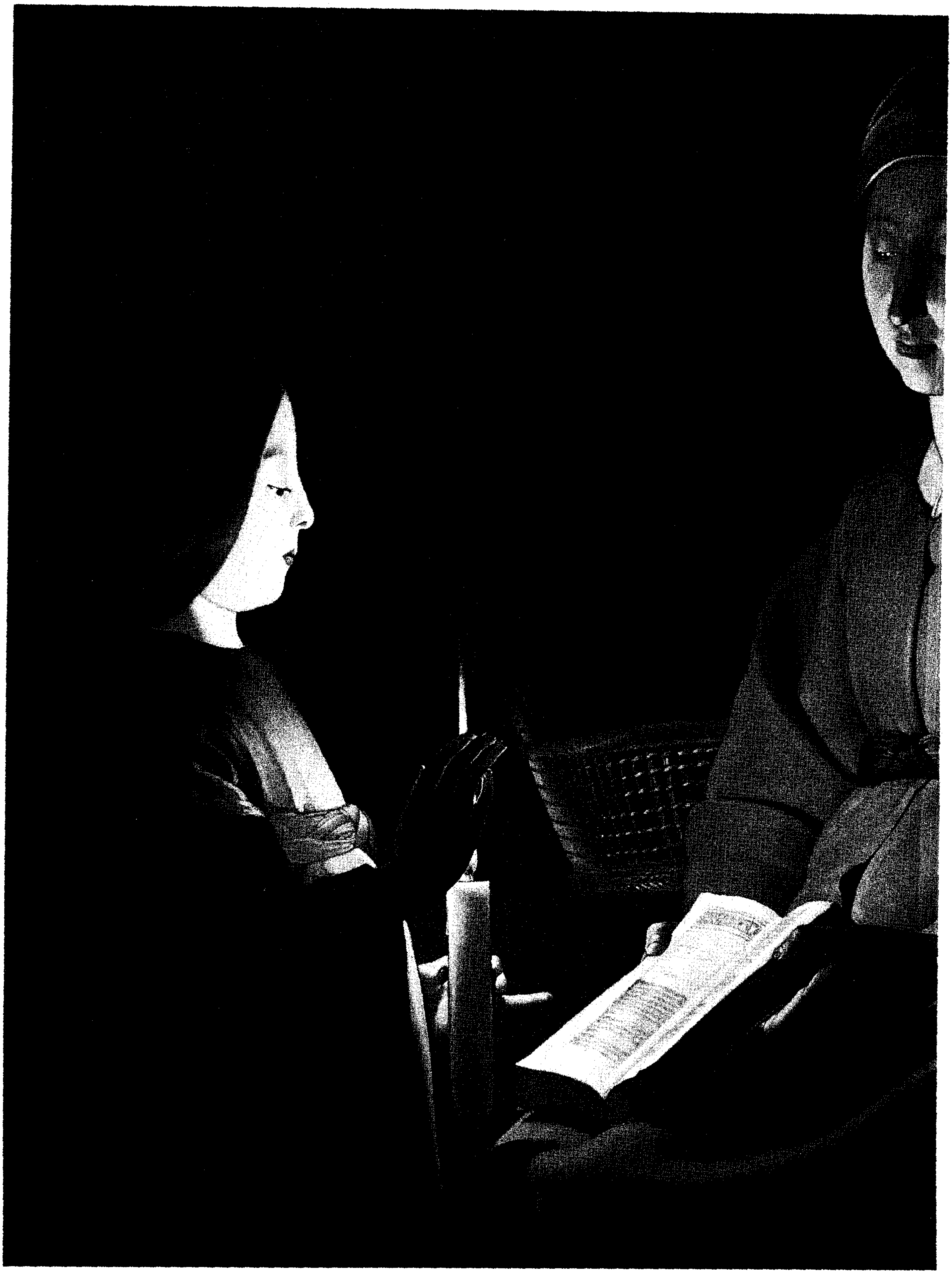
This project became so real to them that they started to worry about leaving valuable pelts in the shed all day. One of them would have to stand watch while the others went out on the traplines. (Nobody mentioned school.)

This was the way they talked when they got clear of town. They talked as if they were free—or almost free—agents, as if they didn't go to school or live with families or suffer any of the indignities put on them because of their age. Also, as if the countryside and other people's establishments would provide them with all they needed for their undertakings and adventures, with only the smallest risk and effort on their part.

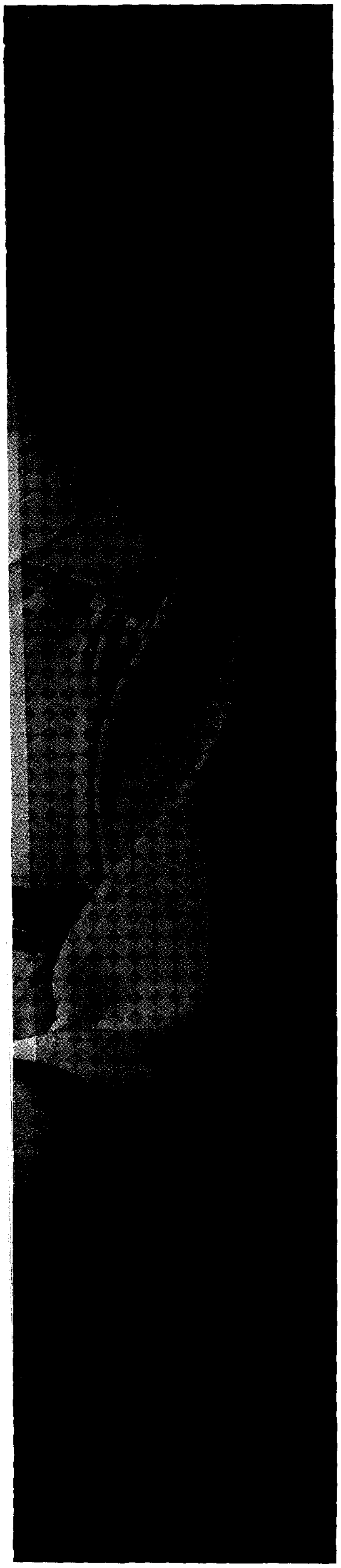
Another change in their conversation out here was that they practically gave up using names. They didn't use each other's real names much anyway—not even family nicknames such as Bud. But at school nearly everyone had another name, some of these having to do with the way people looked or talked, like Goggle or Jabber, and some, like Sorearse and Chickenfucker, having to do with incidents real or fabulous in the lives of those named, or in the lives—such names were handed down for decades—of their brothers, fathers, or uncles. These were the names they let go of when they were out in the bush or on the river flats. If they had to get one another's attention, all they said was "Hey." Even the use of names that were outrageous and obscene and that grownups supposedly never heard would have spoiled a sense they had at these times, of taking each other's looks, habits, family, and personal history entirely for granted.

And yet they hardly thought of each other as friends. They would never have designated someone as a best friend or a next-best friend, or joggled people around in these positions, the way girls did. Any one of at least a dozen boys could have been substituted for any one of these three, and accepted by the others in exactly the same way. Most members of that company were between nine and twelve years old, too old to be bound by yards and neighborhoods but too young to have jobs—even jobs sweeping the sidewalk in front of stores or delivering groceries by bicycle. Most of them lived in the north end of town, which meant that they would be expected to get a job of that sort as soon as they were old enough, and that none of them would ever be sent away to Appleby or to Upper Canada College. And none of them lived in a shack or had a relative in jail. Just the same, there were notable differences as to how they lived at home and what was expected of them in life. But these differences dropped away as soon as they were out of sight of the county jail and the grain elevator and the church steeples and out of range of the chimes of the courthouse clock.

ON their way back they walked fast. Sometimes they trotted but did not run. Jumping, dallying, splashing were all abandoned, and the noises they'd made on their way out, the hoots and howls, were put aside as well. Any windfall of the flood was taken note of but passed by. In fact they made their way as adults would do, at a fairly steady speed and by the most reasonable route, with the weight on them of where they had to go and what had to be done next. They had something close in front of them, a picture in front of their eyes that came



FIRST READING *"The Education of the Virgin," in the Georges de La Tour show at the National Gallery in Washington (until January 5th), has left*



ck Collection for the first time in fifty years.

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between them and the world, which was exactly the thing most adults seemed to have. The pond, the car, the arm, the hand. They had some idea that when they got to a certain spot they would start to shout. They would come into town yelling and waving their news around them and everybody would be stock still, taking it in.

They crossed the bridge the same way as always, on the shelf. But they had no sense of risk or courage or nonchalance. They might as well have taken the walkway.

Instead of following the sharp-turning road from which you could reach both the harbor and the square, they climbed straight up the bank on a path that came out near the railway sheds. The clock played its quarter-after chimes. A quarter after twelve.

This was the time when people were walking home for dinner. People from offices had the afternoon off. But people who worked in stores were getting only their customary hour—the stores stayed open till ten or eleven o'clock on Saturday night.

Most people were going home to a hot, filling meal. Pork chops, or sausages, or boiled beef, or cottage roll. Potatoes for certain, mashed or fried; winter-stored root vegetables or cabbage or creamed onions. (A few housewives, richer or more feckless, might have opened a tin of peas or butter beans.) Bread, muffins, preserves, pie. Even those people who didn't have a home to go to, or who for some reason didn't want to go there, would be sitting down to much the same sort of food at the Duke of Cumberland, or the Merchants' Hotel, or for less money behind the foggy windows of Shervill's Dairy Bar.

Those walking home were mostly men. The women were already there—they were there all the time. But some women of middle age who worked in stores or offices for a reason that was not their fault—dead husbands or sick husbands or never any husband at all—were friends of the boys' mothers, and they called out greetings even across the street (it was worst for Bud Salter, whom they called Buddy) in a certain amused or sprightly way that brought to mind all they knew of family matters, of distant infancies.

Men didn't bother greeting boys by name, even if they knew them well. They called them "boys" or "young fellows" or, occasionally, "sirs."

"Good day to you, sirs."

"You boys going straight home now?"

"What monkey business you young fellows been up to this morning?"

All these greetings had a degree of jocularity, but there were differences. The men who said "young fellows" were better disposed—or wished to seem better disposed—than the ones who said "boys." "Boys" could be the signal that a telling off was to follow, for offenses that could be either vague or specific. "Young fellows" indicated that the speaker had once been young himself. "Sirs" was outright mockery and disparagement but didn't open the way to any scolding, because the person who said that could not be bothered.

When answering, the boys didn't look up past any lady's purse or any man's Adam's apple. They said "Hullo" clearly, because there might be some kind of trouble if you didn't, and in answer to queries they said "Yessir" and "Nosir" and "Nothing much." Even on this day, such voices speaking to them caused some alarm and confusion, and they replied with the usual reticence.

At a certain corner they had to separate. Cece Ferns, always the most anxious about getting home, pulled away first. He said, "See you after dinner."

Bud Salter said, "Yeah. We got to go downtown then."

This meant, as they all understood, "downtown to the Police Office." It seemed that without needing to consult each other they had taken up a new plan of operation, a soberer way of telling their news. But it wasn't clearly said that they wouldn't be telling anything at home. There wasn't any good reason why Bud Salter or Jimmy Box couldn't have done that.

Cece Ferns never told anything at home.

Cece Ferns was an only child. His parents were older than most boys' parents, or perhaps they only seemed older, because of the disabling life they lived together. When he got away from the other boys, Cece started to trot, as he usually did for the last block home. This was not because he was eager to get there or because he thought he could make anything better when he did. It may have been to make the time pass quickly, because the last block had to be full of apprehension.

His mother was in the kitchen. Good. She was out of bed though still in her wrapper. His father wasn't there, and that was good, too. His father worked at the grain elevator and got Saturday afternoon off, and if he wasn't home by now it was likely that he had gone straight to the Cumberland. That meant it would be late in the day before they had to deal with him.

Cece's father's name was Cece Ferns, too. It was a well-known and generally an affectionately known name in Walley, and somebody telling a story even thirty or forty years later would take it for granted that everybody would know it was the father who was being talked about, not the son. If a person relatively new in town said, "That doesn't sound like Cece," he would be told that nobody meant *that* Cece.

"Not him, we're talking about his old man."

They talked about the time Cece Ferns went to the hospital—or was taken there—with pneumonia, or some other desperate thing, and the nurses wrapped him in wet towels or sheets to get the fever down. The fever sweated out of him, and all the towels and sheets turned brown. It was the nicotine in him. The nurses had never seen anything like it. Cece was delighted. He claimed to have been smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol since he was ten years old.

And the time he went to church. It was hard to imagine why, but it was the Baptist church, and his wife was a Baptist, so perhaps he went to please her, though that was even harder to imagine. They were serving Communion the Sunday he went, and in the Baptist Church the bread is bread but the wine is grape juice. "What's this?" cried Cece Ferns aloud. "If this is the blood of the Lamb then He must've been pretty damn anemic."

Preparations for the noon meal were under way in the Fernses' kitchen. A loaf of sliced bread was sitting on the table and a can of diced beets had been opened. A few slices of bologna had been fried—before the eggs, though they should have been done after—and were being kept slightly warm on top of the stove. And now Cece's mother had started the eggs. She was bending over the stove with the egg lifter in one hand and the other hand pressed to her stomach, cradling a pain.

Cece took the egg lifter out of her hand and turned down the electric heat, which was way too high. He had to hold the pan off the burner while the burner cooled down, in order to keep the egg whites from getting too tough or burning at the edges. He hadn't been in time to wipe out the old grease and plop a bit of fresh lard in the pan. His mother never wiped out the old grease, just let it sit from one meal to the next and put in a bit of lard when she had to.

When the heat was more to his liking, he put the pan down and coaxed the lacy edges of the eggs into tidy circles. He found a clean spoon and dribbled a little hot fat over the yokes to set them. He and his mother liked their eggs cooked this way, but his mother often couldn't manage it right. His father liked his eggs

HEMINGWAY'S HAT

Wearing a copy of the canvas
leather-peaked cap Hemingway wore
at the Finca Vigia—which your mother gave you
to make you look dashing, nerveless,

and which makes me feel
like a Shakespearean heroine
dressed as and played by a boy—
I wonder what I'd be like as a man:

not just brave but "needing
to be seen to be brave" like Hem;
or like my father, gentle, nervous,
"not a man," as my mother shrieked at him?

She'd wanted a son to replace her brother
lost in the last months of the war in Burma.
I tried—when I started to bleed,
getting my hair cut short as a boy's.

Then, while you raced stolen cars
for the thrill, I changed myself
into a girl—stilettos, stiff
nylon petticoats, a perm.

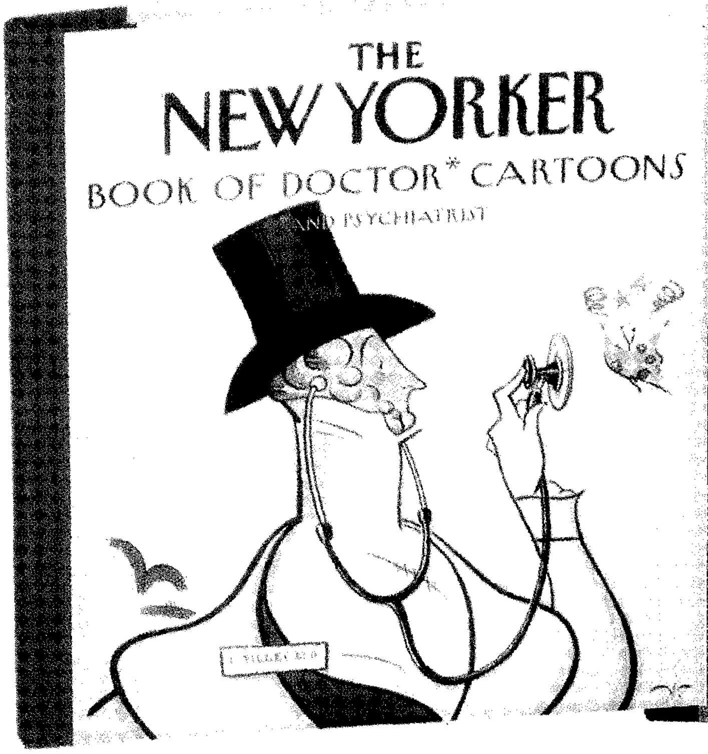
You travelled from war to war,
until you came here, where dark butterflies
reconnoitre the lawn, and the cats sleep
in the shade of your chair, and you heard—

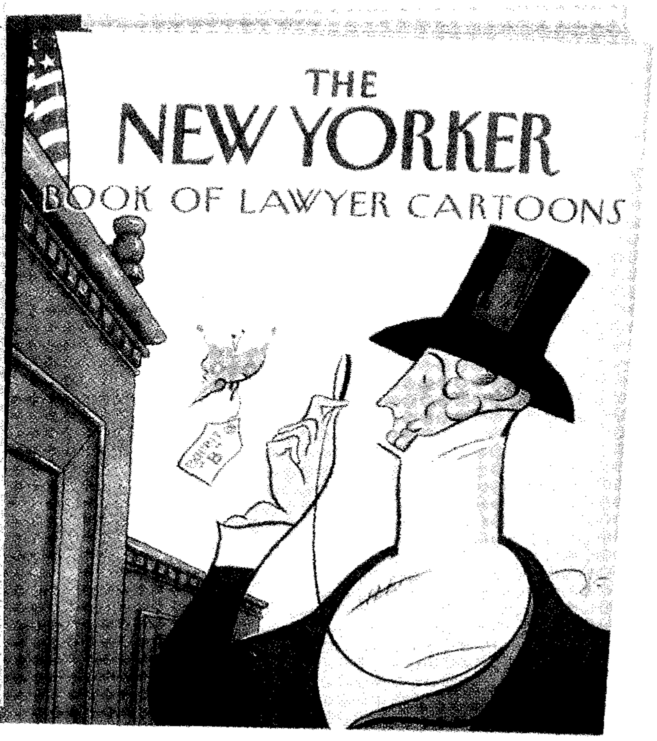
among oaks and firs and birches—
a silence like the silence at Plei Me
when you saw the dead rising
above the field of battle.

In our games of changing hats,
we float free like those ghosts:
last night, me riding you,
our shared penis

a glistening pillar
sliding between us; this morning,
you washing me, soaping and rinsing
with a woman's tenderness.

—Vicki Feaver





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The kitten-size
NEW YORKER BOOK
OF CAT CARTOONS

THE NEW YORKER BOOK OF DOG CARTOONS

turned over and flattened out like pancakes, cooked hard as shoe leather and blackened with pepper. Cece could cook them the way he wanted, too.

None of the other boys knew how practiced he was in the kitchen—just as none of them knew about the hiding place he had made outside the house in the blind corner past the dining-room window, behind the Japanese barberry.

His mother sat in the chair by the window while he was finishing up the eggs. She kept an eye on the street. There was still a chance that his father would come home for something to eat. He might not be drunk yet. But the way he behaved didn't always depend on how drunk he was. If he came into the kitchen now he might tell Cece to make him some eggs, too. Then he might ask him where his apron was and say that he would make some fellow a dandy wife. That would be how he'd behave if he was in a good mood. In another sort of mood he would start off by staring at Cece in a certain way—that is, with an exaggerated, absurdly threatening expression—and telling him he better watch out.

"Smart bugger, aren't you? Well, all I got to say to you is, better watch out."

Then if Cece looked back at him, or maybe if he didn't look back, or if he dropped the egg lifter or set it down with a clatter—or even if he was sliding around being extra cautious about not dropping anything and not making a noise—his father was apt to start showing his teeth and snarling like a dog. It would have been ridiculous—it was ridiculous—except that he meant business. A minute later the food and the dishes might be on the floor and the chairs or the table overturned and he might be chasing Cece around the room yelling how he was going to get him this time, flatten his face on the hot burner, how would he like that? You would be certain he'd gone crazy. But if at this moment a knock came at the door—if a friend of his arrived, say, to pick him up—his face would reassemble itself in no time and he would open the door and call out the friend's name in a loud bantering voice.

"I'll be with you in two shakes. I'd ask you in, but the wife's been pitching the dishes around again."

He didn't intend this to be believed. He said such things in order to turn whatever happened in his house into a joke.

Cece's mother asked him if the weather was warming up and where he had been that morning.

"Yeah," he said, and, "Out on the flats."

She said that she'd thought she could smell the wind on him.

"You know what I'm going to do right after we eat?" she said. "I'm going to take a hot-water bottle and go right back to bed and maybe I'll get my strength back and feel like doing something."

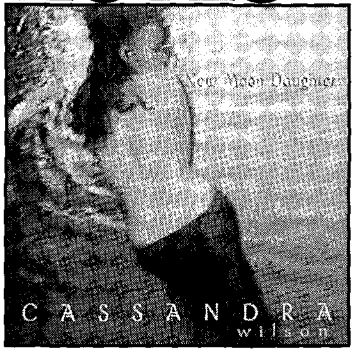
That was what she nearly always said she was going to do, but she always announced it as if it were an idea that had just occurred to her, a hopeful decision.

BUD SALTER had two older sisters who never did anything useful unless his mother made them. And they never confined their hair arranging, nail polishing, shoe cleaning, making up, or even dressing activities to their bedrooms or the bathroom. They spread their combs and curlers and face powder and nail polish and shoe polish all over the house. Also they loaded every chair back with their newly ironed dresses and blouses and spread out their drying sweaters on towels on every clear space of floor. (Then they screamed at you if you walked near them.) They stationed themselves in front of various mirrors—the mirror in the hall coat stand, the mirror in the dining-room buffet, and the mirror beside the kitchen door with the shelf underneath always loaded with safety pins, bobby pins, pennies, buttons, bits of pencils. Sometimes one of them would stand in front of a mirror for twenty minutes or so, checking herself from various angles, inspecting her teeth and pulling her hair back then shaking it forward. Then she would walk away apparently satisfied or at least finished—but only as far as the next room, the next mirror, where she would begin all over again just as if she had been delivered a new head.

Right now his older sister, the one who was supposed to be good-looking, was taking the pins out of her hair in front of the kitchen mirror. Her head was covered with shiny curls like snails. His other sister, on orders from his mother, was mashing the potatoes. His five-year-old brother was sitting in place at the table, banging his knife and fork up and down and yelling, "Want some service. Want some service."

He got that from their father, who did it for a joke.

NEW NOTES



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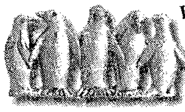

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Bud passed by his brother's chair and said quietly, "Look. She's putting lumps in the mashed potatoes again."

He had his brother convinced that lumps were something you added, like raisins to rice pudding, from a supply in the cupboard.

His brother stopped chanting and began complaining.

"I won't eat none if she puts in lumps. Mama, I won't eat none if she puts lumps."

"Oh, don't be silly," Bud's mother said. She was frying apple slices and onion rings with the pork chops. "Quit whining like a baby."

"It was Bud got him started," the older sister said. "Bud went and told him she was putting lumps in. Bud always tells him that and he doesn't know any better."

"Bud ought to get his face smashed," said Doris, the sister who was mashing the potatoes. She didn't always say such things idly—she had once left a claw scar down the side of Bud's cheek.

Bud went over to the dresser, where there was a rhubarb pie cooling. He took a fork and began carefully, secretly prying at it, letting out delicious steam, a delicate smell of cinnamon. He was trying to open one of the vents in the top of it so that he could get a taste of the filling. His brother saw what he was doing but was too scared to say anything. His brother was spoiled and was defended by his sisters all the time—Bud was the only person in the house he respected.

"Want some service," he repeated, speaking now in a thoughtful undertone.

Doris came over to the dresser to get the bowl for the mashed potatoes. Bud made an incautious movement, and part of the top crust caved in.

"So now he's wrecking the pie," Doris said. "Mama—he's wrecking your pie."

"Shut your damn mouth," Bud said.

"Leave that pie alone," said Bud's mother with a practiced, almost serene severity. "Stop swearing. Stop tattle-telling. Grow up."

JIMMY BOX sat down to dinner at a crowded table. He and his father and his mother and his four-year-old and six-year-old sisters lived in his grandmother's house with his grandmother and his great-aunt Mary and his bachelor uncle. His father had a bicycle-repair shop in the shed behind the house, and his mother worked in Honeker's Department Store.

Jimmy's father was crippled—the result of a polio attack when he was twenty-two years old. He walked bent forward from the hips, using a cane. This didn't show so much when he was working in the shop, because such work often means being bent over anyway. When he walked along the street he did look very strange, but nobody called him names or did an imitation of him. He had once been a notable hockey player and baseball player for the town, and some of the grace and valor of the past still hung around him, putting his present state into perspective, so that it could be seen as a phase (though a final one). He helped this perception along by cracking silly jokes and taking an optimistic tone, denying the pain that showed in his sunken eyes and kept him awake many nights. And, unlike Cece Ferns's father, he didn't change his tune when he came into his own house.

But, of course, it wasn't his own house. His wife had married him after he was crippled, though she had got engaged to him before, and it seemed the natural thing to do to move in with her mother, so that the mother could look after any children who came along while the wife went on working at her job. It seemed the natural thing to the wife's mother as well, to take on another family—just as it seemed natural that her sister Mary should move in with the rest of them when her eyesight failed, and that her son Fred, who was extraordinarily shy, should continue to live at home unless he found some place he liked better. This was a family who accepted burdens of one kind or another with even less fuss than they accepted the weather. In fact, nobody in that house would have spoken of Jimmy's father's condition or Aunt Mary's eyesight as burdens or problems, any more than they would of Fred's shyness. Drawbacks and adversity were not to be noticed, not to be distinguished from their opposites.

There was a traditional belief in the family that Jimmy's grandmother was an excellent cook, and this might have been true at one time, but in recent years there had been a falling off. Economies were practiced beyond what there was any need for now. Jimmy's mother and his uncle made decent wages and his Aunt Mary got a pension and the bicycle shop was fairly busy, but one egg was used in-

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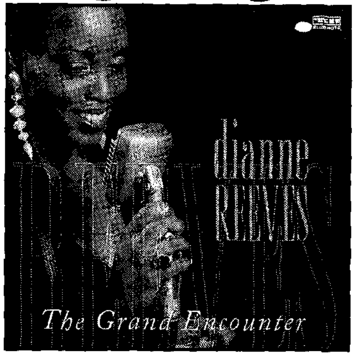

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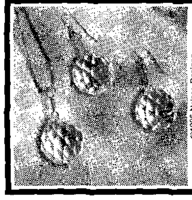

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stead of three and the meat loaf got an extra cup of oatmeal. There was an attempt to compensate by overdoing the Worcestershire sauce or sprinkling too much nutmeg on the custard. But nobody complained. Everybody praised. Complaints were as rare as lightning balls in that house. And everybody said "Excuse me," even the little girls said "Excuse me," when they bumped into each other. Everybody passed and pleased and thank-you'd at the table as if there were company every day. This was the way they managed, all of them crammed so tight in the house, with clothes piled on every hook, coats hung over the bannister, and cots set up permanently in the dining room for Jimmy and his Uncle Fred, and the buffet hidden under a load of clothing waiting to be ironed or mended. Nobody pounded on the stairsteps or shut doors hard or turned the radio up loud or said anything disagreeable.

Did this explain why Jimmy kept his mouth shut that Saturday at dinnertime? They all kept their mouths shut, all three of them. In Cece's case it was easy to understand. His father would never have stood for Cece's claiming so important a discovery. He would have called him a liar as a matter of course. And Cece's mother, judging everything by the effect it would have on his father, would have understood—correctly—that even his going to the Police Office with his story would cause disruption at home, so she would have told him to please just keep quiet. But the two other boys lived in quite reasonable homes and they could have spoken. In Jimmy's house there would have been consternation and some disapproval, but soon enough they would have admitted that it was not Jimmy's fault.

Bud's sisters would have asked if he was crazy. They might even have twisted things around to imply that it was just like him, with his unpleasant habits, to come upon a dead body. His father, however, was a sensible, patient man, used to listening to many strange rigmaroles in his job, as a freight agent at the railway station. He would have made Bud's sisters shut up, and after some serious talk to make sure Bud was telling the truth and not exaggerating he would have phoned the Police Office.

It was just that their houses seemed too full. Too much was going on already. This was true in Cece's house just as much as in the others, because even in his father's absence there was the threat and memory all the time of his haywire presence.

"Did you tell?"

"Did you?"

"Me neither."

They walked downtown, not thinking about the way they were going. They turned on to Shipka Street and found themselves going past the stucco bungalow where Mr. and Mrs. Willens lived. They were right in front of it before they recognized it. It had a small bay window on either side of the front door and a top step wide enough for two chairs, not there at present but occupied on summer evenings by Mr. Willens and his wife. There was a flat-roofed addition to one side of the house, with another door opening toward the street and a separate walk leading up to it. A sign beside that door said "D. M. Willens, Optometrist." None of the boys themselves had visited that office, but Jimmy's Aunt Mary went there regularly for her eyedrops, and his grandmother got her glasses there. So did Bud Salter's mother.

The stucco was a muddy pink color and the doors and window frames were painted brown. The storm windows had not been taken off yet, as they hadn't from most of the houses in town. There was nothing special at all about the house, but the front yard was famous for its flowers. Mrs. Willens was a renowned gardener who didn't grow her flowers in long rows beside the vegetable garden, as Jimmy's grandmother and Bud's mother grew theirs. She had them in round beds and crescent beds and all over, and in circles under the trees. In a couple of weeks daffodils would fill this lawn. But at present the only thing in bloom was a forsythia bush at the corner of the house. It was nearly as high as the eaves and it sprayed yellow into the air the way a fountain shoots water.

The forsythia shook, not with the wind, and out came a stooped brown figure. It was Mrs. Willens in her old gardening clothes, a lumpy little woman in baggy slacks and a ripped jacket and a peaked cap that might have been her husband's—it slipped down too low and almost hid her eyes. She was carrying a pair of shears.

They slowed right down—it was either that or run. Maybe they thought that she wouldn't notice them, that they could turn themselves into posts. But she had seen them already; that was why she came hastening through.

"I see you're gawking at my forsythia," said Mrs. Willens. "Would you like some to take home?"

What they had been gawking at was not the forsythia but the whole scene—the house looking just as usual, the sign by the office door, the curtains letting light in. Nothing hollow or ominous, nothing that said that Mr. Willens was not inside and that his car was not in the garage behind his office but in Jutland Pond. And Mrs. Willens out working in her yard, where anybody would expect her to be—everybody in town said so—the minute the snow was melted. And calling out in her familiar tobacco-roughened voice, abrupt and challenging but not unfriendly—a voice identifiable half a block away or coming from the back of any store.

"Wait," she said. "Wait, now, I'll get you some."

She began smartly, selectively snapping off the bright-yellow branches, and when she had all she wanted she came toward them behind a screen of flowers.

"Here you are," she said. "Take these home to your mothers. It's always good to see the forsythia, it's the very first thing in the spring." She was dividing the branches among them. "Like all Gaul," she said. "All Gaul is divided into three parts. You must know about that if you take Latin."

"We aren't in high school yet," said Jimmy, whose life at home had readied him, better than the others, for talking to ladies.

"Aren't you?" she said. "Well, you've got all sorts of things to look forward to. Tell your mothers to put them in lukewarm water. Oh, I'm sure they already know that. I've given you branches that aren't all the way out yet, so they should last and last."

They said thank you—Jimmy first and the others picking it up from him. They walked toward downtown with their arms loaded. They had no intention of turning back and taking the flowers home, and they counted on her not having any good idea of where their homes were. Half a block on, they sneaked looks back to see if she was watching.

She wasn't. The big house near the sidewalk blocked the view in any case.

The forsythia gave them something to think about. The embarrassment of carrying it, the problem of getting rid of it. Otherwise, they would have to think about Mr. Willens and Mrs. Willens. How she could be busy in her yard and he could be drowned in his car. Did she know where he was or did she not? It seemed that she couldn't. Did she even know that he was gone? She had acted as if there was nothing wrong, nothing at all, and when they were standing in front of her this had seemed to be the truth. What they knew, what they had seen, seemed actually to be pushed back, to be defeated, by her not knowing it.

Two girls on bicycles came wheeling around the corner. One was Bud's sister Doris. At once these girls began to hoot and yell.

"Oh, look at the flowers," they shouted. "Where's the wedding? Look at the beautiful bridesmaids."

Bud yelled back the worst thing he could think of.

"You got blood all over your arse."

Of course she didn't, but there had been an occasion when this had really been so—she had come home from school with blood on her skirt. Everybody had seen it and it would never be forgotten.

He was sure she would tell on him at home, but she never did. Her shame about that other time was so great that she could not refer to it even to get him in trouble.

THEY realized then that they had to dump the flowers at once, so they simply threw the branches under a parked car. They brushed a few stray petals off their clothes as they turned on to the square.

Saturdays were still important then; they brought the country people into town. Cars were already parked around the square and on the side streets. Big country boys and girls and smaller children from the town and the country were heading for the movie matinée.

It was necessary to pass Honeker's in the first block. And there, in full view in one of the windows, Jimmy saw his mother. Back at work already, she was putting the hat straight on a female dummy, adjusting the veil, then fiddling with the shoulders of the dress. She was a short woman and she had to stand on tiptoe to do this properly. She had taken

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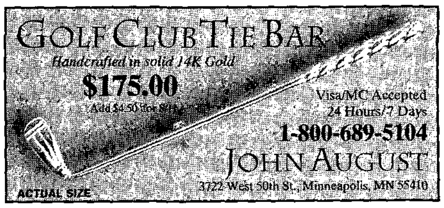
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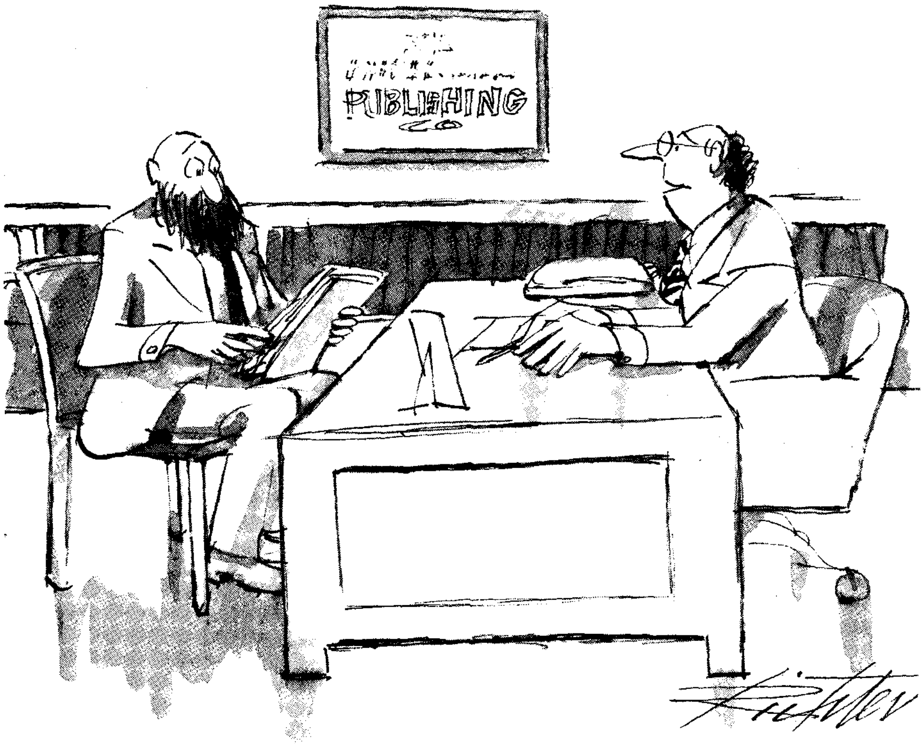

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off her shoes to walk on the window carpet. You could see the rosy plump cushions of her heels through her stockings, and when she stretched you saw the back of her knee through the slit in her skirt. Above that was a wide but shapely behind and the line of her panties or girdle. Jimmy could hear in his mind the little grunts she would be making; also he could smell the stockings that she sometimes took off as soon as she got home, to save them from runs. Stockings and underwear, even clean female underwear, had a faint, private smell that was both appealing and disgusting.

He hoped two things. That the others hadn't noticed her (they had, but the idea of a mother dressed up every day and out in the public world of town was so strange to them that they couldn't comment, could only dismiss it) and that she would not, please not, turn around and spot him. She was capable, if she did that, of rapping on the glass and mouthing hello. At work she lost the hushed discretion, the studied gentleness, of home. Her obligingness turned from meek to pert. He used to be delighted by this other side of her, this friskiness, just as he was by Honeker's, with its extensive counters of glass and varnished wood, its big mirrors at the top of the staircase, in which he could see himself climbing up to Ladies' Wear, on the second floor.

"Here's my young mischief," his mother would say, and sometimes slip him a dime. He could never stay more than a minute; Mr. or Mrs. Honeker might be watching.

Young mischief.

Words that were once as pleasant to hear as the tinkle of dimes and nickels had now turned slyly shaming.

They were safely past.

In the next block they had to pass the Duke of Cumberland, but Cece had no worries. If his father had not come home at dinnertime, it meant he would be in there for hours yet. But the word "Cumberland" always fell across his mind heavily. From the days when he hadn't even known what it meant, he got a sense of sorrowful plummeting. A weight hitting dark water, far down.

Between the Cumberland and the Town Hall was an unpaved alley, and at the back of the Town Hall was the Police Office. They turned into this alley and soon a lot of new noise reached them, opposing the street noise. It was not from the Cumberland—the noise in there was all muffled up, the beer parlor having only small, high windows like a public toilet. It was coming from the Po-

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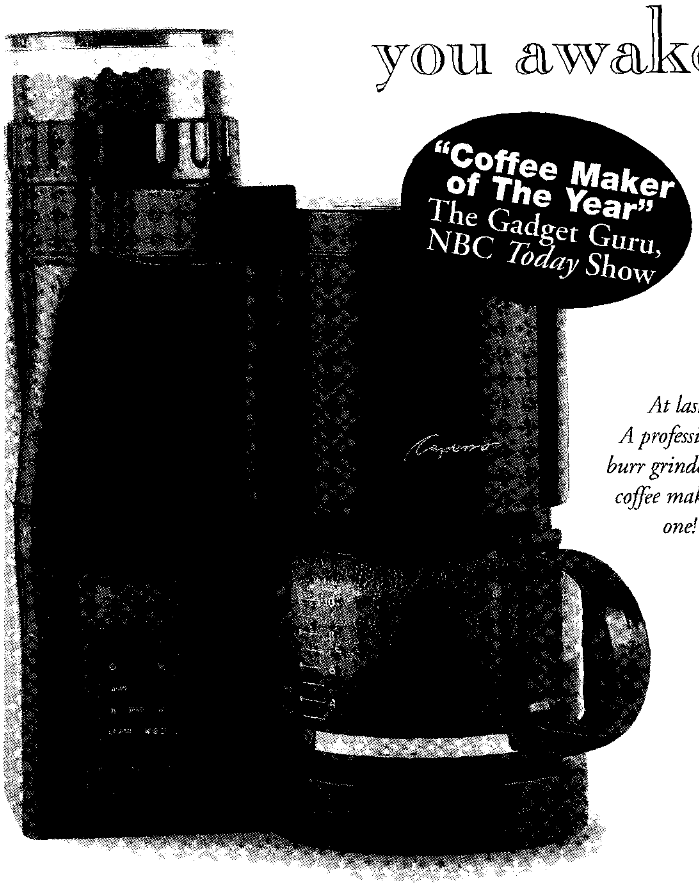

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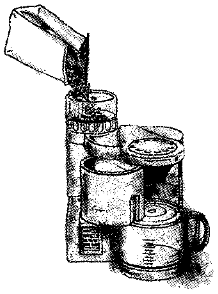

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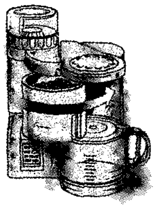

Step 2.
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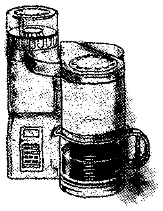

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lice Office. The door to that office was open on account of the mild weather, and even out in the alley you could smell the pipe tobacco and cigars. It wasn't just the policemen who sat in there, especially on Saturday afternoons, with the stove going in winter and the fan in summer and the door open to let in the pleasant air on an in-between day like today. Colonel Box would be there—in fact, they could already hear the wheeze he made, the long-drawn-out aftereffects of his asthmatic laughter. He was a relative of Jimmy's, but there was a coolness in the family because he did not approve of Jimmy's father's marriage. He spoke to Jimmy, when he recognized him, in a surprised, ironic tone of voice. "If he ever offers you a quarter or anything, you say you don't need it," Jimmy's mother had told him. But Colonel Box had never made such an offer.

Also, Mr. Pollock would be there, who had retired from the drugstore, and Fergus Solley, who was not a half-wit but looked like one, because he had been gassed in the First World War. All day these men and others played cards, smoked, told stories, and drank coffee at the town's expense (as Bud's father said). Anybody wanting to make a complaint or a report had to do it within sight of them and probably within earshot.

Run the gantlet.

They came almost to a stop outside the open door. Nobody had noticed them. Colonel Box said, "I'm not dead yet," repeating the final line of some story. They began to walk past slowly with their heads down, kicking at the gravel. Round the corner of the building they picked up speed. By the entry to the Men's Public Toilet there was a recent streak of lumpy vomit on the wall and a couple of empty bottles on the gravel. They had to walk between the refuse bins and the high watchful windows of the Town Clerk's office, and then they were off the gravel, back on the square.

"I got money," Cece said. This matter-of-fact announcement brought them all relief. Cece jingled change in his pocket. It was the money his mother had given him after he washed up the dishes, when he went into the front bedroom to tell her he was going out. "Help yourself to fifty cents off the dresser," she had said. Sometimes she had money, though he never saw his father give her any. And whenever she said "Help yourself" or gave him a few coins, Cece understood that she was ashamed of their life, ashamed for him and in front of him, and these were the times when he hated the sight of her (though he was glad of the money). Especially if she said that he was a good boy and he was not to think she wasn't grateful for all he did.

They took the street that led down to the harbor. At the side of Paquette's Service Station there was a booth from which Mrs. Paquette sold hot dogs, ice cream, candy, and cigarettes. She had refused to sell them cigarettes even when Jimmy said they were for his Uncle Fred. But she didn't hold it against them that they'd tried. She was a fat, pretty woman, a French Canadian.

They bought some licorice whips, black and red. They meant to buy some ice cream later when they weren't so full from dinner. They went over to where there were two old car seats set up by the fence under a tree that gave shade in summer. They shared out the licorice whips.

Captain Tervitt was sitting on the other seat.

Captain Tervitt had been a real captain, for many years, on the lake boats. Now he had a job as a Special Constable. He stopped the cars to let the children cross the street in front of the school and kept them from sledding down the side street in winter. He blew his whistle and held up one big hand, which looked like a clown's hand, in a white glove. He was still tall and straight and broad-shouldered, though old and white-haired. Cars would do what he said, and children, too.

At night he went around checking the doors of all the stores to see that they were locked and to make sure that there was nobody inside committing a burglary. During the day he often slept in public. When the weather was bad he slept in the library and when it was good he chose some seat out-of-doors. He didn't spend much time in the Police Office, probably because he was too deaf to follow the conversation without his hearing aid in, and like many deaf people he hated his hearing aid. And he was used to being solitary, surely, staring out over the bow of the lake boats.

His eyes were closed and his head tilted back so that he could get the sun in his face. When they went over to talk to him (and the decision to do this was made without any consultation, beyond one resigned and dubious look) they had to wake him from his doze. His face took a moment to register—where and when and who. Then he took a large old-fashioned watch out of his pocket, as if he counted on children always wanting to be told the time. But they went on talking to him, with their expressions agitated and slightly shamed. They were saying, "Mr. Willens is out in Jutland Pond," and "We seen the car," and "Drowned." He had to hold up his hand and make shushing motions while the other hand went rooting around in his pants pocket and came up with his hearing aid. He nodded his head seriously, encouragingly, as if to say, "Patience, patience," while he got the device settled in his ear. Then both hands up—be still, be still—while he was testing. Finally another nod, of a brisker sort, and in a stern voice—but making a joke to some extent of his sternness—he said, "Proceed."

Cece, who was the quietest of the three—as Jimmy was the politest and Bud the mouthiest—was the one who turned everything around.

"Your fly's undone," he said.

Then they all whooped and ran away. The jolt of freedom, the joy of outrage, the uttermost trespass.

THEIR elation did not vanish right away. But it was not something that could be shared or spoken about: they had to pull apart.

Cece went home to work on his hideaway. The cardboard floor, which had been frozen through the winter, was sodden now and needed to be replaced. Jimmy climbed into the loft of the garage, where he had recently discovered a box of old Doc Savage magazines that had once belonged to his Uncle Fred. Bud went home and found nobody there but his mother, who was waxing the dining-room floor. He looked at comic books for an hour or so and then he told her. He believed that his mother had no experience or authority outside their house and that she would not make up her mind about what to do until she had phoned his father. To his surprise, she immediately phoned the police. Then she phoned his father. And somebody went to round up Cece and Jimmy.

A police car drove in to Jutland from the township road, and all was confirmed. A policeman and the Anglican minister went to see Mrs. Willens.

"I didn't want to bother you," Mrs. Willens was reported to have said. "I was going to give him till dark."

She told them that Mr. Willens had driven out to the country yesterday afternoon to take some drops to an old blind man. Sometimes he got held up, she said. He visited people, or the car got stuck.

Was he downhearted or anything like that? the policeman asked her.

"Oh, surely not," the minister said. "He was the bulwark of the choir."

"The word was not in his vocabulary," said Mrs. Willens.

Something was made of the boys' sitting down and eating their dinners and never saying a word. And then buying a bunch of licorice whips. A new nickname—Deadman—was found and settled on each of them. Jimmy and Bud bore it till they left town, and Cece—who married young and went to work in the elevator—saw it passed on to his two sons. By that time nobody thought of what it referred to.

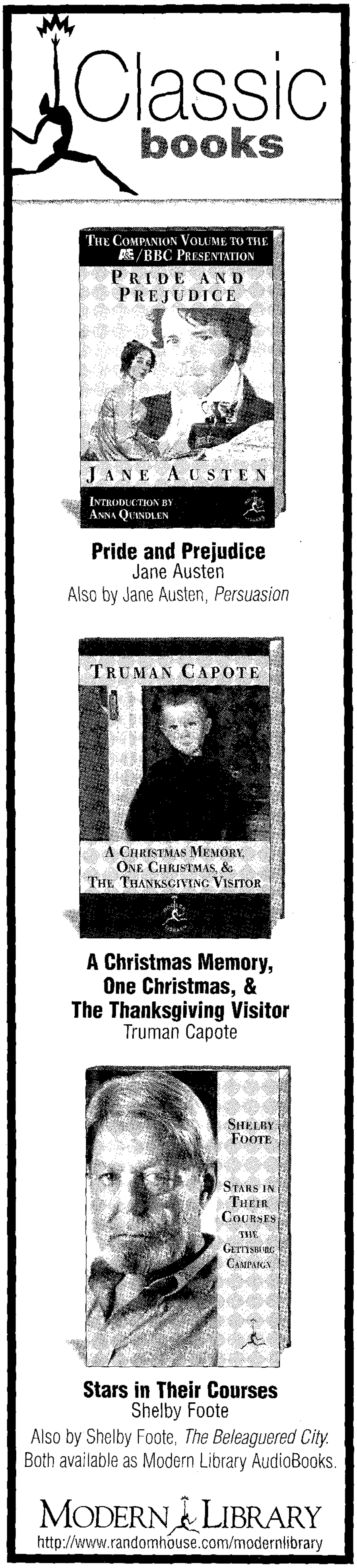
The insult to Captain Tervitt remained a secret.

Each of them expected some reminder, some lofty look of injury or judgment, the next time they had to pass under his uplifted arm, crossing the street to the school. But he held up his gloved hand, his noble and clownish white hand, with his usual benevolent composure. He gave consent.

Proceed.

II. HEART FAILURE

"GLOMERULONEPHRITIS," Enid wrote in her notebook. It was the first case that she had ever seen. The fact was that Mrs. Quinn's kidneys were failing, and nothing could be done about it. Her kidneys were drying up and turning into hard and useless granular lumps. Her urine at present was scanty and had a smoky look, and the smell that came out on her breath and through her skin was acrid and ominous. And there was another, fainter smell, like rotted fruit, that seemed to Enid related to the pale lavender-brown stains appearing on her body. Her legs twitched in spasms of sudden pain and her skin was subject to



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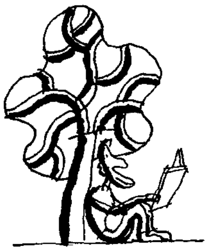
a violent itching, so that Enid had to rub her with ice. She wrapped the ice in towels and pressed the packs to the spots in torment.

"How do you contract that kind of a disease anyhow?" said Mrs. Quinn's sister-in-law. Her name was Mrs. Green. Olive Green. (It had never occurred to her how that would sound, she said, until she got married and all of a sudden everybody was laughing at it.) She lived on a farm a few miles away, out on the highway, and every few days she came and took the sheets and towels and nightdresses away to wash. She did the children's washing as well, brought everything back freshly ironed and folded. She even ironed the ribbons on the nightdresses. Enid was grateful to her—she had been on jobs where she had to do the laundry herself, or, worse still, load it onto her mother, who would pay to have it done in town. Not wanting to offend but seeing which way the questions were tending, she said, "It's hard to tell."

"Because you hear one thing and another," Mrs. Green said. "You hear that *sometimes a woman might take* some pills. They get these pills to take for when their period is late and if they take them just like the doctor says and for a good purpose that's fine, but if they take too many and for a bad purpose their kidneys are wrecked. Am I right?"



"I've never come in contact with a case like that," Enid said.

Mrs. Green was a tall, stout woman. Like her brother Rupert, who was Mrs. Quinn's husband, she had a round, snub-nosed, agreeably wrinkled face—the kind that Enid's mother called "potato Irish." But behind Rupert's good-humored expression there was wariness and withholding. And behind Mrs. Green's there was yearning. Enid did not know for what. To the simplest conversation Mrs. Green brought a huge demand. Maybe it was just a yearning for news. News of something momentous. An event.

Of course, an event was coming, something momentous at least in this family. Mrs. Quinn was going to die, at the age of twenty-seven. (That was the age she gave herself—Enid would have put some years on it, but once an illness had progressed this far age was hard to guess.) When her kidneys stopped working altogether, her heart would give out and she would die. The doctor had said to Enid, "This'll take you into the summer, but the chances are you'll get some kind of a holiday before the hot weather's over."

"Rupert met her when he went up north," Mrs. Green said. "He went off by himself, he worked in the bush up there. She had some kind of a job in a hotel. I'm not sure what. Chambermaid job. She wasn't raised up there, though—she says she was raised in an orphanage in Montreal. She can't help that. You'd expect her to speak French, but if she does she don't let on."

Enid said, "An interesting life."

"You can say that again."

"An interesting life," said Enid. Sometimes she couldn't help it—she tried a joke where it had hardly a hope of working. She raised her eyebrows encouragingly, and Mrs. Green did smile.

But was she hurt? That was just the way Rupert would smile, in high school, warding off some possible mockery.

"He never had any kind of a girlfriend before that," said Mrs. Green.

Enid had been in the same class as Rupert, though she did not mention that to Mrs. Green. She felt some embarrassment now because he was one of the boys—in fact, the main one—that she and her girlfriends had teased and tormented. "Picked on," as they used to say. They had picked on Rupert, following him up the street calling out, "Hello, Ru-pert. Hello, Ru-pert," putting him into a state of agony, watching his neck go red. "Rupert's got scarlet fever," they would say. "Rupert, you should be quarantined." And they would pretend that one of them—Enid, Joan McAuliffe, Marian Denny—had a case on him. "She wants to speak to you, Rupert. Why don't you ever ask her out? You could phone her up at least. She's dying to talk to you."

They did not really expect him to respond to these pleading overtures. But what joy if he had. He would have been rejected in short order and the story broadcast all over the school. Why? Why did they treat him this way, long to humiliate him? Simply because they could.

Impossible that he would have forgotten. But he treated Enid as if she were a new acquaintance, his wife's nurse, come into his house from anywhere at all. And Enid took her cue from him.

Things had been unusually well arranged here, to spare her extra work. Rupert slept at Mrs. Green's house, and ate his meals there. The two little girls could have been there as well, but it would have meant putting them into another school—there was nearly a month to go before school was out for the summer.

Rupert came into the house in the evenings and spoke to his children.

"Are you being good girls?" he said.

"Show Daddy what you made with your blocks," said Enid. "Show Daddy your pictures in the coloring book."

The blocks, the crayons, the coloring books were all provided by Enid. She had phoned her mother and asked her to see what things she could find in the old trunks. Her mother had done that, and brought along as well an old book of cut-out dolls which she had collected from someone—Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose and their many outfits. Enid hadn't been able to get the little girls to say thank you until she put all these things on a high shelf and announced that they would stay there till thank you was said. Lois and Sylvie were seven and six years old, and as wild as little barn cats.

Rupert didn't ask where the playthings came from. He told his daughters to be good girls and asked Enid if there was anything she needed from town. Once she told him that she had replaced the light bulb in the cellarway and that he could get her some spare bulbs.

"I could have done that," he said.

"I don't have any trouble with light bulbs," said Enid. "Or fuses or knocking in nails. My mother and I have done without a man around the house for a long time now." She meant to tease a little, to be friendly, but it didn't work.

Finally Rupert would ask about his wife, and Enid would say that her blood pressure was down slightly, or that she had eaten and kept down part of an omelette for supper, or that the ice packs seemed to ease her itchy skin and she was sleeping better. And Rupert would say that if she was sleeping he'd better not go in.

Enid said, "Nonsense." To see her husband would do a woman more good than to have a little doze. She took the children up to bed then, to give man and wife a time of privacy. But Rupert never stayed more than a few minutes. And when Enid came back downstairs and went into the front room—now the sickroom—to ready the patient for the night, Mrs. Quinn would be lying back against the pillows, looking agitated but not dissatisfied.

"Doesn't hang around here very long, does he?" Mrs. Quinn would say. "Makes me laugh. Ha-ha-ha, how-are-you? Ha-ha-ha, off-we-go. Why don't we take her out and throw her on the manure pile? Why don't we just dump her out like a dead cat? That's what he's thinking. Isn't he?"

"I doubt it," said Enid, bringing the basin and towels, the rubbing alcohol and the baby powder.

"I doubt it," said Mrs. Quinn quite viciously, but she submitted readily enough to having her nightgown removed, her hair smoothed back from her face, a towel slid under her hips. Enid was used to people making a fuss about being naked, even when they were very old or very ill. Sometimes she would have to tease them or badger them into common sense. "Do you think I haven't seen any bottom parts before?" she would say. "Bottom parts, top parts, it's pretty boring after a while. You know, there's just the two ways we're made." But Mrs. Quinn was without shame, opening her legs and raising herself a bit to make the job easier. She was a little bird-boned woman, queerly shaped now, with her swollen abdomen and limbs and her breasts shrunk to tiny pouches with dried-currant nipples.

"Swole up like some kind of pig," Mrs. Quinn said. "Except for my tits, and they always were kind of useless. I never had no big udders on me, like you. Don't you get sick of the sight of me? Won't you be glad when I'm dead?"

"If I felt like that I wouldn't be here," said Enid.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish," said Mrs. Quinn. "That's what you'll all say. Good riddance to bad rubbish. I'm no use to him anymore, am I? I'm no use to any man. He goes out of here every night and he goes to pick up women, doesn't he?"

"As far as I know, he goes to his sister's house."

"As far as you know. But you don't know much."

Enid thought she knew what this meant, this spite and venom, the energy saved for ranting. Mrs. Quinn was flailing about for an enemy. Sick people grew

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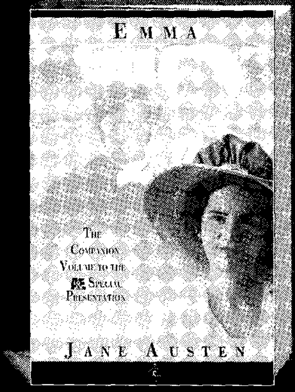

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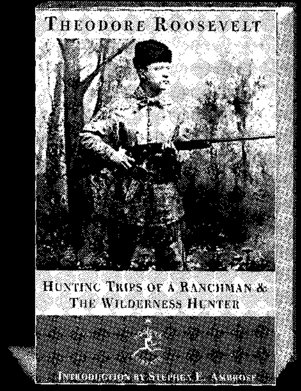
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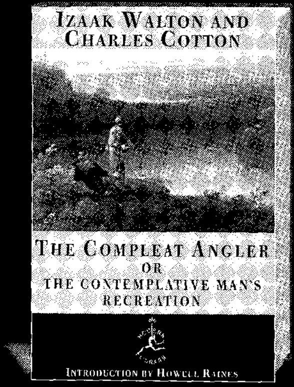
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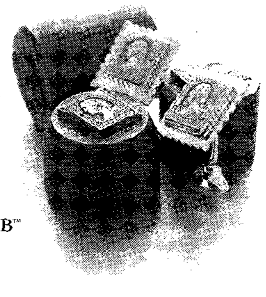
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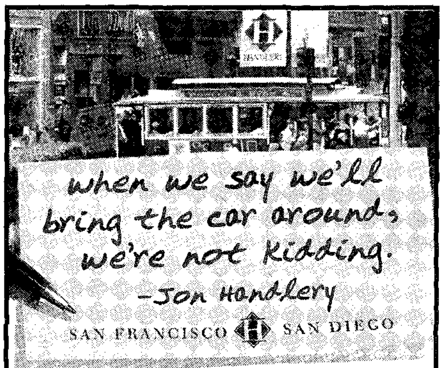

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to resent well people, and sometimes that was true of husbands and wives, or even of mothers and their children. Both husband and children in Mrs. Quinn's case. On a Saturday morning, Enid called Lois and Sylvie from their games under the porch, to come and see their mother looking pretty. Mrs. Quinn had just had her morning wash, and was in a clean nightgown, with her fine, sparse, fair hair brushed and held back by a blue ribbon. (Enid took a supply of these ribbons with her when she went to nurse a female patient—also a bottle of cologne and a cake of scented soap.) She did look pretty—or you could see at least that she had once been pretty, with her wide forehead and cheekbones (they almost punched the skin now, like china doorknobs) and her large greenish eyes and childish translucent teeth and small stubborn chin.

The children came into the room obediently if unenthusiastically.

Mrs. Quinn said, "Keep them off of my bed, they're filthy."

"They just want to see you," said Enid.

"Well, now they've seen me," said Mrs. Quinn. "Now they can go."

This behavior didn't seem to surprise or disappoint the children. They looked at Enid, and Enid said, "All right, now, your mother better have a rest," and they ran out and slammed the kitchen door.

"Can't you get them to quit doing that?" Mrs. Quinn said. "Every time they do it, it's like a brick hits me in my chest."

You would think these two daughters of hers were a pair of rowdy orphans, wished on her for an indefinite visit. But that was the way some people were, before they settled down to their dying and sometimes even up to the event itself. People of a gentler nature—it would seem—than Mrs. Quinn might say that they knew how much their brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, and children had always hated them, how much of a disappointment they had been to others and others had been to them, and how glad they knew everybody would be to see them gone. They might say this at the end of peaceful, useful lives in the midst of loving families, where there was no explanation at all for such fits. And usually the fits passed. But often, too, in the last weeks or even days of life there was mulling over of old feuds and slights or whimpering about some unjust punishment suffered seventy years earlier. Once a woman had asked Enid to bring her a willow platter from the cupboard and Enid had thought that she wanted the comfort of looking at this one pretty possession for the last time. But it turned out that she wanted to use her last, surprising strength to smash it against the bedpost.

"Now I know my sister's never going to get her hands on that," she said.

And often people remarked that their visitors were only coming to gloat and that the doctor was responsible for their sufferings. They detested the sight of Enid herself, for her sleepless strength and patient hands and the way the juices of life were so admirably balanced and flowing in her. Enid was used to that, and she was able to understand the trouble they were in, the trouble of dying and also the trouble of their lives that sometimes overshadowed that.

But with Mrs. Quinn she was at a loss.

It was not just that she couldn't supply comfort here. It was that she couldn't want to. She could not conquer her dislike of this doomed, miserable young woman. She disliked this body that she had to wash and powder and placate with ice and alcohol rubs. She understood now what people meant when they said that they hated sickness and sick bodies; she understood the women who had said to her, I don't know how you do it, I could never be a nurse, that's the one thing I could never be. She disliked this particular body, all the particular signs of its disease. The smell of it and the discoloration, the malignant-looking little nipples and the pathetic ferretlike teeth. She saw all this as the sign of a willed corruption. She was as bad as Mrs. Green, sniffing out rampant impurity. In spite of being a nurse who knew better, and in spite of it being her job—and surely her nature—to be compassionate. She didn't know why this was happening. Mrs. Quinn reminded her somewhat of girls she had known in high school—cheaply dressed, sickly-looking girls with dreary futures, who still displayed a hard-faced satisfaction with themselves. They lasted only a year or two—they got pregnant, most of them got married. Enid had nursed some of them in later years, in home childbirth, and found their confidence exhausted and their bold streak turned into meekness, or even piety. She was sorry for them, even when she remembered how determined they had been to get what they had got.

Mrs. Quinn was a harder case. Mrs. Quinn might crack and crack, but there would be nothing but sullen mischief, nothing but rot inside her.

Worse even than the fact that Enid should feel this revulsion was the fact that Mrs. Quinn knew it. No patience or gentleness or cheerfulness that Enid could summon would keep Mrs. Quinn from knowing. And Mrs. Quinn made knowing it her triumph.

Good riddance to bad rubbish.

WHEN Enid was twenty years old, and had almost finished her nurse's training, her father was dying in the Walley hospital. That was when he said to her, "I don't know as I care for this career of yours. I don't want you working in a place like this."

Enid bent over him and asked what sort of place he thought he was in. "It's only the Walley hospital," she said.

"I know that," said her father, sounding as calm and reasonable as he had always done (he was an insurance and real-estate agent). "I know what I'm talking about. Promise me you won't."

"Promise you what?" said Enid.

"You won't do this kind of work," her father said. She could not get any further explanation out of him. He tightened up his mouth as if her questioning disgusted him. All he would say was "Promise."

"What is all this about?" Enid asked her mother, and her mother said, "Oh, go ahead. Go ahead and promise him. What difference is it going to make?"

Enid thought this a shocking thing to say, but made no comment. It was consistent with her mother's way of looking at a lot of things.

"I'm not going to promise anything I don't understand," she said. "I'm probably not going to promise anything anyway. But if you know what he's talking about you ought to tell me."

"It's just this idea he's got now," her mother said. "He's got an idea that nursing makes a woman coarse."

Enid said, "Coarse."

Her mother said that the part of nursing her father objected to was the familiarity nurses had with men's bodies. Her father thought—he had decided—that such familiarity would change a girl, and furthermore that it would change the way men thought about that girl. It would spoil her good chances and give her a lot of other chances that were not so good. Some men would lose interest and others would become interested in the wrong way.

"I suppose it's all mixed up with wanting you to get married," he mother said.

"Too bad if it is," said Enid.

But she ended up promising. And her mother said, "Well, I hope that makes you happy." Not "makes him happy." Makes *you.* It seemed that her mother had known before Enid did just how tempting this promise would be. The deathbed promise, the self-denial, the wholesale sacrifice. And the more absurd the better. This was what she had given in to. And not for love of her father, either (her mother implied), but for the thrill of it. Sheer noble perversity.

"If he'd asked you to give up something you didn't care one way or the other about, you'd probably have told him nothing doing," her mother said. "If for instance he'd asked you to give up wearing lipstick. You'd still be wearing it."

Enid listened to this with a patient expression.

"Did you pray about it?" said her mother sharply.

Enid said yes.

She withdrew from nursing school; she stayed at home and kept busy. There was enough money that she did not have to work. In fact, her mother had not wanted Enid to go into nursing in the first place, claiming that it was something poor girls did, it was a way out for girls whose parents couldn't keep them or send them to college. Enid did not remind her of this inconsistency. She painted a fence, she tied up the rosebushes for winter. She learned to bake and she learned to play bridge, taking her father's place in the weekly games her mother played with Mr. and Mrs. Willens from next door. In no time at all she became—as Mr. Willens said—a scandalously good player. He took to turning up with chocolates or a pink rose for her, to make up for his own inadequacies as a partner.

She went skating in the winter evenings. She played badminton.

She had never lacked friends, and she didn't now. Most of the people who had been in the last year of high school with her were finishing college now, or were already working at a distance, as teachers or nurses or chartered accountants. But she made friends with others who

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had dropped out before senior year to work in banks or stores or offices, to become plumbers or milliners. The girls in this group were dropping like flies, as they said of each other—they were dropping into matrimony. Enid was an organizer of bridal showers and a help at trousseau teas. In a couple of years would come the christenings, where she could expect to be a favorite godmother. Children not related to her would grow up calling her Aunt. And she was already a sort of honorary daughter to women of her mother's age and older, the only young woman who had time for the Book Club and the Horticultural Society. So, quickly and easily, still in her youth, she was slipping into this essential, central, yet isolated role.

But in fact it had been her role all along. In high school she was always the class secretary or class social convener. She was well liked and high-spirited and well dressed and good-looking, but she was slightly set apart. She had friends who were boys but never a boyfriend. She did not seem to have made a choice this way, but she was not worried about it, either. She had been preoccupied with her ambition—to be a missionary, at one embarrassing stage, and then to be a nurse. She had never thought of nursing as just something to do until she got married. Her hope was to be good, and do good, and not necessarily in the orderly, customary, wifely way.

At New Year's she went to the dance in the Town Hall. The man who danced with her most often, and escorted her home, and pressed her hand good night, was the manager of the creamery—a man in his forties, never married, an excellent dancer, an avuncular friend to girls unlikely to find partners. No woman ever took him seriously.

"Maybe you should take a business course," her mother said. "Or why shouldn't you go to college?"

Where the men might be more appreciative, she was surely thinking.

"I'm too old," said Enid.

Her mother laughed. "That only shows how young you are," she said. She seemed relieved to discover that her daughter had a touch of folly natural to her age—that she could think twenty-one was at a vast distance from eighteen.

"I'm not going to troop in with kids out of high school," Enid said. "I mean it. What do you want to get rid of me for anyway? I'm fine here." This sulkiness or sharpness also seemed to please and reassure her mother. But after a moment she sighed, and said, "You'll be surprised how fast the years go by."

That August there were a lot of cases of measles and a few of polio at the same time. The doctor who had looked after Enid's father, and had observed her competence around the hospital, asked her if she would be willing to help out for a while, nursing people at home. She said that she would think about it.

"You mean pray?" her mother said, and Enid's face took on a stubborn, secretive expression that in another girl's case might have had to do with meeting her boyfriend.

"That promise," she said to her mother the next day. "That was about working in a hospital, wasn't it?"

Her mother said that she had understood it that way, yes.

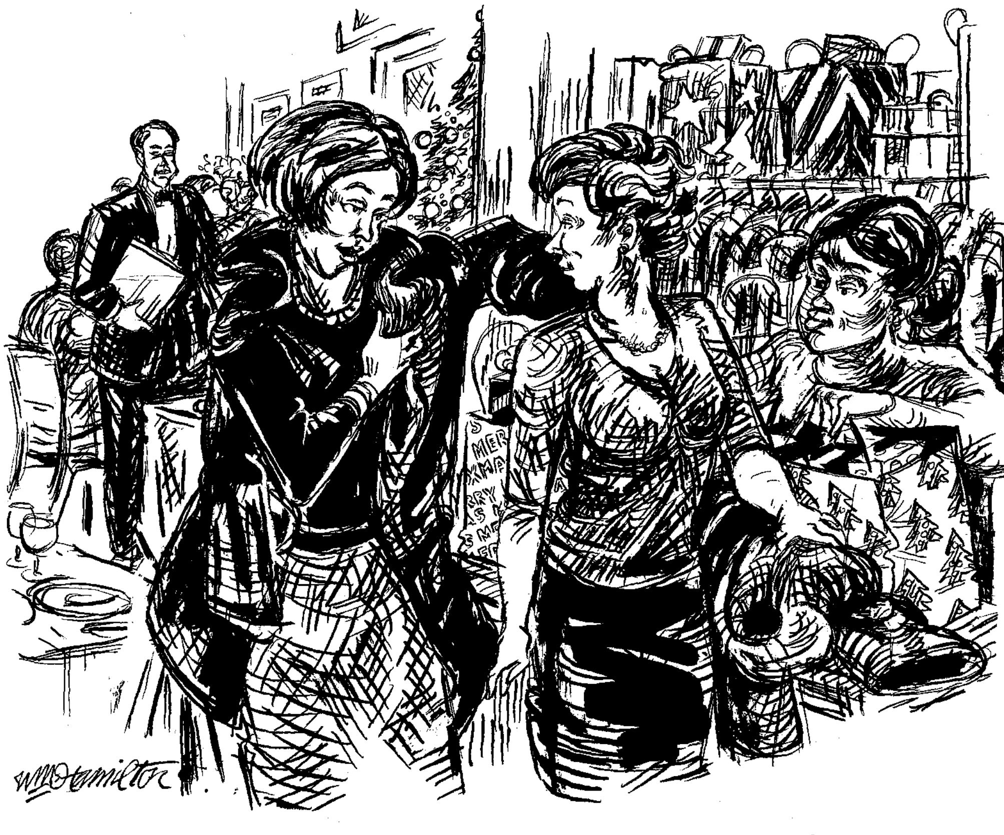
"And with graduating and being a registered nurse?"

Yes, yes.

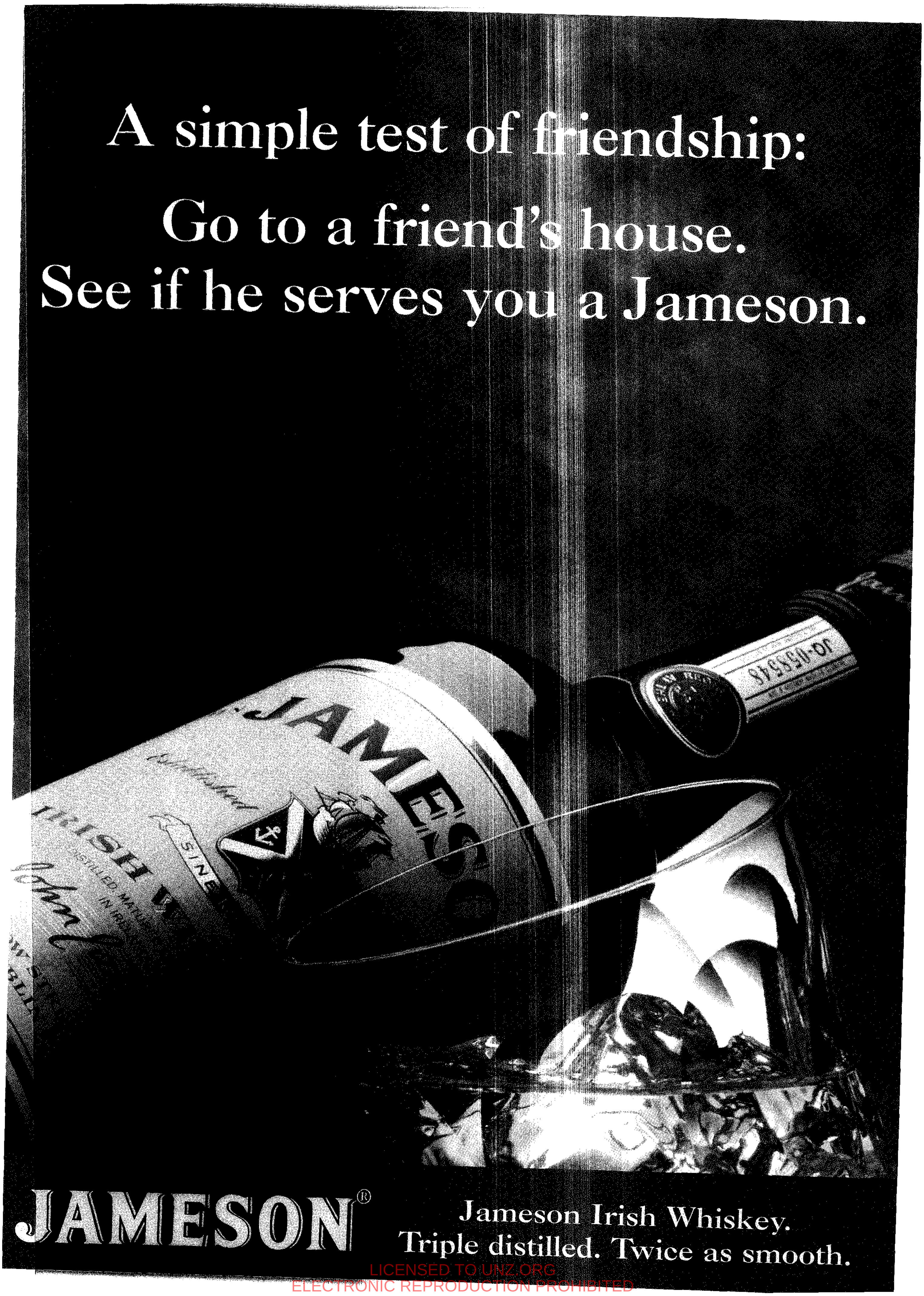
So if there were people who needed nursing at home, who couldn't afford to go to the hospital or did not want to go, and if Enid went into their houses to nurse them, not as a registered nurse but as what they called a practical nurse, she would hardly be breaking her promise, would she? And since most of those needing her care would be children or women having babies, or old people dying, there would not be much danger of the coarsening effect, would there?

"If the only men you get to see are men who are never going to get out of bed again, you have a point," said her mother.

But she could not keep from adding that what all this meant was that Enid had decided to give up the possibility of a decent job in a hospital in order to do miserable backbreaking work in miserable primitive houses for next to no money. Enid would find herself pumping water from contaminated wells and breaking ice in winter washbasins and battling flies in summer and using an outdoor toilet. Scrubboards and coal-oil lamps instead of washing ma-



"For big, important things, it's the Met and the Modern, of course—but the Whitney is great for stocking-stuffers."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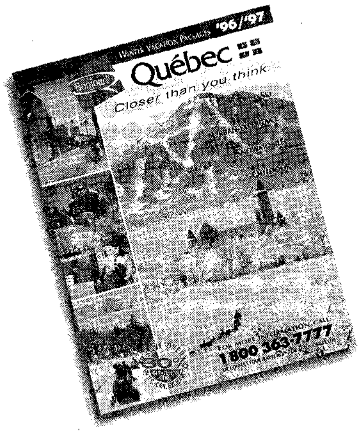

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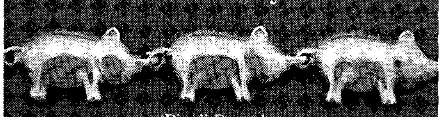

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chines and electricity. Trying to look after sick people in those conditions and cope with housework and poor weaselly children as well.

"But if that is your object in life," she said, "I can see that the worse I make it sound the more determined you get to do it. The only thing is, I'm going to ask for a couple of promises myself. Promise me you'll boil the water you drink. And you won't marry a farmer."

Enid said, "Of all the crazy ideas."

That was sixteen years ago. During the first of those years people got poorer and poorer. There were more and more of them who could not afford to go to the hospital, and the houses where Enid worked had often deteriorated almost to the state that her mother had described. Sheets and diapers had to be washed by hand in houses where the washing machine had broken down and could not be repaired, or the electricity had been turned off, or where there had never been any electricity in the first place. Enid did not work without pay, because that would not have been fair to the other women who did the same kind of nursing, and who did not have the same options as she did. But she gave most of the money back, in the form of children's shoes and winter coats and trips to the dentist and Christmas toys.

Her mother went around canvassing her friends for old baby cots, and highchairs and blankets, and worn-out sheets, which she herself ripped up and hemmed to make diapers. Everybody said how proud she must be of Enid, and she said yes, she surely was.

"But sometimes it's a devil of a lot of work," she said. "This being the mother of a saint."

THEN came the war, and the great shortage of doctors and nurses, and Enid was more welcome than ever. As she was for a while after the war, with so many babies being born. It was only now, with the hospitals being enlarged and many farms getting prosperous, that it looked as if her responsibilities might dwindle away to the care of those who had bizarre and hopeless afflictions, or were so irredeemably cranky that hospitals had thrown them out.

THIS summer there was a great downpour of rain every few days, and then the sun came out very hot, glittering off the drenched leaves and grass. Early mornings were full of mist—they were so close, here, to the river—and even when the mist cleared off you could not see very far in any direction, because of the overflow and density of summer. The heavy trees, the bushes all bound up with wild grapevines and Virginia creeper, the crops of corn and barley and wheat and hay. Everything was ahead of itself, as people said. The hay was ready to cut in June, and Rupert had to rush to get it into the barn before a rain spoiled it.

He came into the house later and later in the evenings, having worked as long as the light lasted. One night when he came the house was in darkness, except for a candle burning on the kitchen table.

Enid hurried to unhook the screen door.

"Power out?" said Rupert.

Enid said, "Sh-h-h." She whispered to him that she was letting the children sleep downstairs, because the upstairs rooms were so hot. She had pushed the chairs together and made beds on them with quilts and pillows. And of course she had had to turn the lights out so that they could get to sleep. She had found a candle in one of the drawers, and that was all she needed, to see to write by, in her notebook.

"They'll always remember sleeping here," she said. "You always remember the times when you were a child and you slept somewhere different."

He set down a box that contained a ceiling fan for the sickroom. He had been in to Walley to buy it. He had also bought a newspaper, which he handed to Enid.

"Thought you might like to know what's going on in the world," he said.

She spread the paper out beside her notebook, on the table. There was a picture of a couple of dogs playing in a fountain.

"It says there's a heat wave," she said. "Isn't it nice to find out about it?"

Rupert was carefully lifting the fan out of its box.

"That'll be wonderful," she said. "It's cooled off in there now, but it'll be such a comfort to her tomorrow."

"I'll be over early to put it up," he said. Then he asked how his wife had been that day.

Enid said that the pains in her legs had been easing off, and the new pills the doctor had her on seemed to be letting her get some rest.

"The only thing is, she goes to sleep so soon," she said. "It makes it hard for you to get a visit."

"Better she gets the rest," Rupert said.

This whispered conversation reminded Enid of conversations in high school, when they were both in their senior year and that earlier teasing, or cruel flirtation, or whatever it was, had long been abandoned. All that last year Rupert had sat in the seat behind hers, and they had often spoken to each other briefly, always to some immediate purpose. Have you got an ink eraser? How do you spell "incriminate"? Where is the Tyrrhenian Sea? Usually it was Enid, half turning in her seat and able only to sense, not see, how close Rupert was, who started these conversations. She did want to borrow an eraser, she was in need of information, but also she wanted to be sociable. And she wanted to make amends—she felt ashamed of the way she and her friends had treated him. It would do no good to apologize—that would just embarrass him all over again. He was only at ease when he sat behind her, and knew that she could not look him in the face. If they met on the street he would look away until the last minute, then mutter the faintest greeting while she sang out "Hello, Rupert," and heard an echo of the old tormenting tones she wanted to banish.

But when he actually laid a finger on her shoulder, tapping for attention, when he bent forward, almost touching or maybe really touching—she could not tell for sure—her dark thick hair that was wild even in a bob, then she felt forgiven. In a way, she felt honored. Restored to seriousness and to respect.

Where, where exactly, is the Tyrrhenian Sea?

She wondered if he remembered anything at all of that now.

She separated the back and front parts of the paper. Margaret Truman was visiting England, and had curtsied to the Royal Family. The King's doctors were trying to cure his Buerger's disease with Vitamin E.

She offered the front part to Rupert. "I'm going to look at the crossword," she said. "I like to do the crossword—it relaxes me at the end of the day."

Rupert sat down and began to read the paper, and she asked him if he would like a cup of tea. Of course he said not to bother, and she went ahead and made it anyway, understanding that this reply might as well be yes in country speech.

"It's a South American theme," she said, looking at the crossword. "Latin-American theme. First across is a musical . . . *garment*. A musical garment? Garment. A lot of letters. Oh. Oh. I'm lucky tonight. Cape Horn!

"You see how silly they are, these things," she said, and rose and poured the tea.

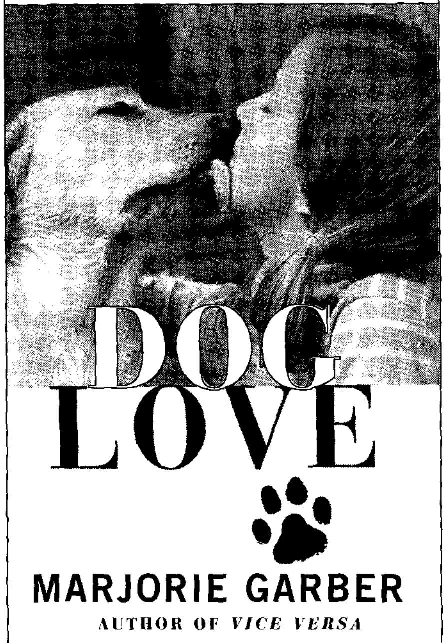
If he did remember, did he hold anything against her? Maybe her blithe friendliness in their senior year had been as unwelcome, as superior-seeming to him, as that early taunting?

When she first saw him in this house, she thought that he had not changed much. He had been a tall, solid, round-faced boy, and he was a tall, heavy, round-faced man. He had worn his hair cut so short, always, that it didn't make much difference that there was less of it now and that it had turned from light brown to gray brown. A permanent sunburn had taken the place of his blushes. And whatever troubled him and showed in his face might have been just the same old trouble—the problem of occupying space in the world and having a name that people could call you by, being somebody they thought they could know.

She thought of them sitting in the senior class. A small class, by that time—in five years the unstudious, the carefree, and the indifferent had been weeded out, leaving these overgrown, grave, and docile children learning trigonometry, learning Latin. What kind of life did they think they were preparing for? What kind of people did they think they were going to be?

She could see the dark-green, softened cover of a book called "History of the Renaissance and Reformation." It was secondhand, or tenthhand—nobody ever bought a new textbook. Inside were written all the names of the previous owners, some of whom were middle-aged housewives or merchants around the town. You could not imagine them learning these things, or underlining "Edict of Nantes" with red ink and writing "N.B." in the margin.

Edict of Nantes. The very uselessness, the exotic nature of the things in those books and in those students' heads, in her own head then and Rupert's, made Enid



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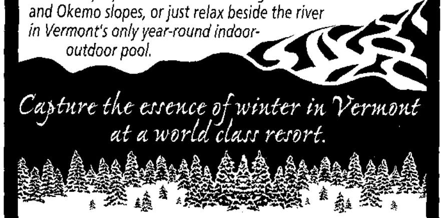
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feel a tenderness and wonder. It wasn't that they had meant to be something that they hadn't become. Nothing like that. Rupert couldn't have imagined anything but farming this farm. It was a good farm, and he was an only son. And she herself had ended up doing exactly what she must have wanted to do. You couldn't say that they had chosen the wrong lives or chosen against their will or not understood their choices. Just that they had not understood how time would pass and leave them not more but maybe a little less than what they used to be.

"Bread of the Amazon," she said. "Bread of the Amazon?"

Rupert said, "Manioc?"

Enid counted. "Seven letters," she said. "Seven."

He said, "Cassava?"

"Cassava? That's a double 's'? Cassava."

MRS. QUINN became more capricious daily about her food. Sometimes she said she wanted toast, or bananas with milk on them. One day she said peanut-butter cookies. Enid prepared all these things—the children could eat them anyway—and when they were ready Mrs. Quinn could not stand the look or the smell of them. Even jello had a smell she could not stand.

Some days she hated all noise; she would not even have the fan going. Other days she wanted the radio on, she wanted the station that played requests for birthdays and anniversaries and called people up to ask them questions. If you got the answer right you won a trip to Niagara Falls, a tankful of gas, or a load of groceries or tickets to a movie.

"It's all fixed," Mrs. Quinn said. "They just pretend to call somebody up—they're in the next room and already got the answer told to them. I used to know somebody that worked for a radio, that's the truth."

On these days her pulse was rapid. She talked very fast in a light, breathless voice. "What kind of car is that your mother's got?" she said.

"It's a maroon-colored car," said Enid.

"What *make*?" said Mrs. Quinn.

Enid said she did not know, which was the truth. She had known, but she had forgotten.

"Was it new when she got it?"

"Yes," said Enid. "Yes. But that was three or four years ago."

"She lives in that big rock house next door to Willenses'?"

Yes, said Enid.

"How many rooms it got? Sixteen?"

"Too many."

"Did you go to Mr. Willens's funeral when he got drownded?"

Enid said no. "I'm not much for funerals."

"I was supposed to go. I wasn't awfully sick then, I was going with Herveys up the highway, they said I could get a ride with them and then her mother and her sister wanted to go and there wasn't enough room in back. Then Clive and Olive went and I could've scrunched up in their front seat but they never thought to ask me. Do you think he drownded himself?"

Enid thought of Mr. Willens handing her a rose. His jokey gallantry that made the nerves of her teeth ache, as from too much sugar.

"I don't know. I wouldn't think so."

"Did him and Mrs. Willens get along all right?"

"As far as I know, they got along beautifully."

"Oh, is that so?" said Mrs. Quinn, trying to imitate Enid's reserved tone. "Bee-you-tif-ley."

ENID slept on the couch in Mrs. Quinn's room. Mrs. Quinn's devastating itch had almost disappeared, as had her need to urinate. She slept through most of the night, though she would have spells of harsh and angry breathing. What woke Enid up and kept her awake was a trouble of her own. She had begun to have ugly dreams. These were unlike any dreams she had ever had before. She used to think that a bad dream was one of finding herself in an unfamiliar house where the rooms kept changing and there was always more work to do than she could handle, work undone that she thought she had done, innumerable distractions. And then, of course, she had what she thought of as romantic dreams, in which some man would have his arm around her or even be embracing her. It might be a stranger or a man she knew—sometimes a man whom it was quite a joke to think of in that way. These dreams made her thoughtful or a little sad but relieved in some way to know that such feelings were possible for her. They could be embarrassing, but were nothing, nothing at all compared with the dreams that she was having now. In the dreams that came to her now she would be copulating or trying to copulate (sometimes she was prevented by intruders or shifts of circumstances) with utterly forbidden and unthinkable partners. With fat squirmy babies or patients in bandages or her own mother. She would be slick with lust, hollow and groaning with it, and she would set to work with roughness and an attitude of evil pragmatism. "Yes, this will have to do," she would say to herself. "This will do if nothing better comes along." And this coldness of heart, this matter-of-fact depravity, simply drove her lust along. She woke up unrepentant, sweaty and exhausted, and lay like a carcass until her own self, her shame and disbelief, came pouring back into her. The sweat went cold on her skin. She lay there shivering in the warm night, with disgust and humiliation. She did not dare go back to sleep. She got used to the dark and the long rectangles of the net-curtained windows filled with a faint light. And the sick woman's breath grating and scolding and then almost disappearing.

If she were a Catholic, she thought, was this the sort of thing that could come out at confession? It didn't seem like the sort of thing she could even bring out in a private prayer. She didn't pray much anymore, except formally, and to bring the experiences she had just been through to the attention of God seemed absolutely useless, disrespectful. He would be insulted. She was insulted, by her own mind. Her religion was hopeful and sensible and there was no room in it for any sort of rubbishy drama, such as the invasion of the Devil into her sleep. The filth in her mind was in her, and there was no point in dramatizing it and making it seem important. Surely not. It was nothing, just the mind's garbage.

In the little meadow between the house and the riverbank there were cows. She could hear them munching and jostling, feeding at night. She thought of their large gentle shapes in there with the money musk and chicory, the flowering grasses, and she thought, They have a lovely life, cows.

It ends, of course, in the slaughterhouse. The end is disaster.

For everybody, though, the same thing. Evil grabs us when we are sleeping; pain and disintegration lie in wait. Animal horrors, all worse than you can imagine beforehand. The comforts of bed and the cows' breath, the pattern of the stars at night—all that can get turned on its head in an instant. And here she was, here was Enid, working her life away pretending it wasn't so. Trying to ease people. Trying to be good. An angel of mercy, as her mother had said, with less and less irony as time went on. Patients and doctors, too, had said it.

And all the time how many thought that she was a fool? The people she spent her labors on might secretly despise her. Thinking they'd never do the same in her place. Never be fool enough. No.

Miserable offenders, came into her head. *Miserable offenders.*

Restore them that are penitent.

So she got up and went to work; as far as she was concerned, that was the best way to be penitent. She worked very quietly but steadily through the night, washing the cloudy glasses and sticky plates that were in the cupboards and establishing order where there was none before. None. Teacups had sat between the ketchup and the mustard and toilet paper on top of a pail of honey. There was no waxed paper or even newspaper laid out on the shelves. Brown sugar in the bag was as hard as rock. It was understandable that things should have gone downhill in the last few months, but it looked as if there had been no care, no organization here, ever. All the net curtains were gray with smoke and the windowpanes were greasy. The last bit of jam had been left to grow fuzz in the jar, and vile-smelling water that had held some ancient bouquet had never been dumped out of its jug. But there was a good house still, that scrubbing and painting could restore. But what could you do about the ugly brown paint that had been recently and sloppily applied to the front-room floor?

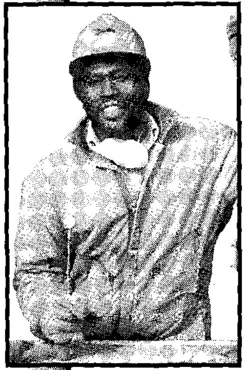
When she had a moment later in the day she pulled the weeds out of Rupert's mother's flower beds, dug up the burdocks and twitch grass that were smothering the valiant perennials.

She taught the children to hold their spoons properly and to say grace.

Thank you for the world so sweet,
Thank you for the food we eat . . .

She taught them to brush their teeth and after that to say their prayers.

"God bless Mama and Daddy and Enid and Aunt Olive and Uncle Clive and Princess Elizabeth and Margaret Rose." After that each added the name



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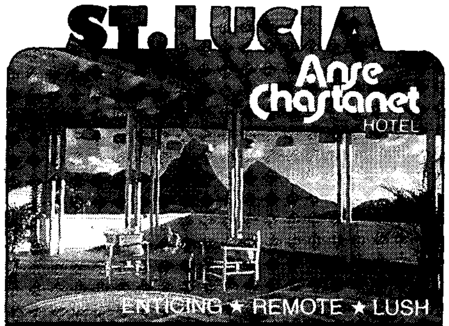

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of the other. They had been doing it for quite a while when Sylvie said, "What does it mean?"

Enid said, "What does what mean?"

"What does it mean 'God bless'?"

ENID made eggnogs, not flavoring them even with vanilla, and fed them to Mrs. Quinn from a spoon. She fed her a little of the rich liquid at a time, and Mrs. Quinn was able to hold down what was given to her in small amounts. If she could not do that, Enid spooned out flat, lukewarm ginger ale.

The sunlight, or any light, was as hateful as noise to Mrs. Quinn by now. Enid had to hang thick quilts over the windows, even when the blinds were pulled down. With the fan shut off, as Mrs. Quinn demanded, the room became very hot, and sweat dripped from Enid's forehead as she bent over the bed attending to the patient. Mrs. Quinn went into fits of shivering; she could never be warm enough.

"This is dragging out," the doctor said. "It must be those milkshakes you're giving her, keeping her going."

"Eggnogs," said Enid, as if it mattered.

Mrs. Quinn was often now too tired or weak to talk. Sometimes she lay in a stupor, with her breathing so faint and her pulse so lost and wandering that a person less experienced than Enid would have taken her for dead. But at other times she rallied, wanted the radio on, then wanted it off. She knew perfectly well who she was still, and who Enid was, and she sometimes seemed to be watching Enid with a speculative or inquiring look in her eyes. The color was long gone from her face and even from her lips, but her eyes looked greener than they had in the past—a milky, cloudy green. Enid tried to answer the look that was bent on her.

"Would you like me to get a priest to talk to you?"

Mrs. Quinn looked as if she wanted to spit.

"Do I look like a Mick?" she said.

"A minister?" said Enid. She knew this was the right thing to ask, but the spirit in which she asked it was not right—it was cold and faintly malicious.

No. This was not what Mrs. Quinn wanted. She grunted with displeasure. There was some energy in her still, and Enid had the feeling that she was building it up for a purpose. "Do you want to talk to your children?" she said, making herself speak compassionately and encouragingly. "Is that what you want?"

No.

"Your husband? Your husband will be here in a little while."

Enid didn't know that for sure. Rupert arrived late some nights, after Mrs. Quinn had taken the final pills and gone to sleep. Then he sat with Enid. He always brought her the newspaper. He asked what she wrote in her notebooks—he noticed that there were two—and she told him. One for the doctor, with a record of blood pressure and pulse and temperature, a record of what was eaten, vomited, excreted, medicines taken, some general summing up of the patient's condition. In the other notebook, for herself, she wrote many of the same things, though perhaps not so exactly, but she added details about the weather and what was happening all around. And things to remember.

"For instance, I wrote something down the other day," she said. "Something that Lois said. Lois and Sylvie came in when Mrs. Green was here and Mrs. Green was mentioning how the berry bushes were growing along the lane and stretching across the road, and Lois said, 'It's like in "Sleeping Beauty." ' Because I'd read them the story. I made a note of that."

Rupert said, "I'll have to get after those berry canes and cut them back."

Enid got the impression that he was pleased by what Lois had said and by the fact that she had written it down, but it wasn't possible for him to say so.

One night he told her that he would be away for a couple of days, at a stock auction. He had asked the doctor if it was all right, and the doctor had said to go ahead.

That night he had come before the last pills were given, and Enid supposed that he was making a point of seeing his wife awake before that little time away. She told him to go right in to Mrs. Quinn's room, and he did, and shut the door after him. Enid picked up the paper and thought of going upstairs to read it, but the children probably weren't asleep yet; they would find excuses for calling her in. She could go out on the porch, but there were mosquitoes at this time of day, especially after a rain like the afternoon's.

She was afraid of overhearing some intimacy or perhaps the suggestion of a fight, then having to face him when he came out. Mrs. Quinn was building up to a display, of that Enid felt sure. And before she made up her mind where to go she did overhear something. Not the recriminations or (if it was possible) the endearments, or perhaps even weeping, that she had been half expecting, but a laugh. She heard Mrs. Quinn weakly laughing, and the laughter had the mockery and satisfaction in it that Enid had heard before but also something she hadn't heard before, not in her life—something deliberately vile. She didn't move, though she should have, and she was at the table still, she was still there staring at the door of the room, when he came out a moment later. He didn't avoid her eyes—or she his. She couldn't. Yet she couldn't have said for sure that he saw her. He just looked at her and went on outside. He looked as if he had caught hold of an electric wire and begged pardon—who of?—that his body was given over to this stupid catastrophe.

The next day Mrs. Quinn's strength came flooding back, in that unnatural and deceptive way that Enid had seen once or twice in others. Mrs. Quinn wanted to sit up against the pillows. She wanted the fan turned on.

Enid said, "What a good idea."

"I could tell you something you wouldn't believe," Mrs. Quinn said.

"People tell me lots of things," said Enid.

"Sure. Lies," Mrs. Quinn said. "I bet it's all lies. You know Mr. Willens was right here in this room?"

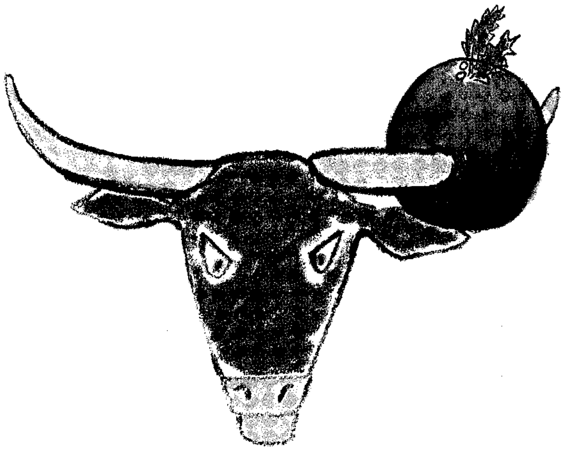
III. MISTAKE

MRS. QUINN had been sitting in the rocker getting her eyes examined and Mr. Willens had been close up in front of her with the thing up to her eyes, and neither one of them heard Rupert come in, because he was supposed to be cutting wood down by the river. But he had sneaked back. He sneaked back through the kitchen not making any noise—he must have seen Mr. Willens's car outside before he did that—then he opened the door to this room just easy, till he saw Mr. Willens there on his

FOOD

PLUM PUDDING

MY mother began her Christmas pudding about eight weeks before the big day. In the morning, after my father went to work, she mixed together fruit peel, raisins, cherries, almonds, bread crumbs, Guinness, brandy, beaten eggs, and an odorless, flaky, off-white substance called suet. In the evening, when my father got home, he would stir the ingredients—a tradition, my mother insisted. The pudding then sat, marinating and maturing and festering, until Christmas Day, when it was served, steamed and hot, flambéed in cognac and accompanied by a dollop of rum butter, as the climax of a large, festive meal. After roast turkey, boiled ham, and "all the trimmings," I could only just manage to eat the pudding—though its oddly dark, even bitter, taste was as much part of the Christmas ritual as the Boxing Day post-present blahs. (Boxing Day or, in the words of the O.E.D., the day on which "post-men, errand-boys, and servants of various kinds expect to receive a Christmas-box.")



For three decades, I ate this pudding with nothing more than a vague theoretical awareness of what was in it. Then, on holiday in France four summers ago, I got into a conversation about Christmas eating customs. My interlocutor described the traditional thirteen desserts of the Provençal Christmas (raisins, quince, walnuts, a fruit pastry called *pompe à l'huile*, etc.). Were there any comparable English traditions? Sure, I said, we have this great pudding made out of booze and dried fruit and this stuff called suet. Which you get out of a packet but which is actually the raw fat that surrounds a cow's kidney.

Suet: before that moment, I hadn't given it a thought. The British, with a few regional exceptions (tripe here, haggis there), are squeamish eaters. But they unreflectingly eat a dessert whose defining ingredient—the thing that binds it all together and adds a distinctive heavy, lowering flavor—is the most primitive kind of cow fat: straight from its innards. Suet isn't even rendered, or cooked and cleared of impurities; compared to suet, lard is a refined, dainty, high-tech cooking medium. The British kitchen is distinguished for combining the sweet and the savory—as in lamb with mint sauce, pork with apple purée—but this Christmas practice of amalgamating fruit and raw animal fat is much more bizarre—and almost entirely unremarked.

My first seventeen Christmas puddings were eaten in the Far East, mainly in Hong Kong. The temperature there was usually in the low seventies—not ideal for a feast designed to be eaten in a far-northern midwinter. The Cantonese must have thought we were mad. Perhaps we were. Northrop Frye has said that all conventions, as conventions, are more or less insane. So much of our expatriate colonial life was an attempt to live as if Hong Kong were really Croydon or Surbiton, with an exotic backdrop and a large number of Chinese onlookers. Our cricket club, our Christmas pudding, our entire culture was a defense against the strangeness of where we were. The predictable result was that a meal intended to celebrate a traditional Christmas (in an England I scarcely knew) now infallibly and overpoweringly reminds me of Hong Kong. The taste it leaves is oddly dark, even bitter.

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knees holding the thing up to her eye and he had the other hand on her leg to keep his balance. He had grabbed her leg to keep his balance and her skirt got scrunched up and her leg showed bare, but that was all there was to it and she couldn't do a thing about it, she had to concentrate on keeping still.

So Rupert got in the room without either of them hearing him come in and then he just gave one jump and landed on Mr. Willens like a bolt of lightning and Mr. Willens couldn't get up or turn around, he was down before he knew it. Rupert banged his head up and down on the floor, Rupert banged the life out of him, and she jumped up so fast the chair went over and Mr. Willens's box where he kept his eye things got knocked over and all the things flew out of it. Rupert just walloped him, and maybe he hit the leg of the stove, she didn't know what. She thought, It's me next. But she couldn't get round them to run out of the room. And then she saw Rupert wasn't going to go for her after all. He was out of wind and he just set the chair right side up and sat down in it. She went to Mr. Willens then and hauled him around, as heavy as he was, to get him right side up. His eyes were not quite open, not shut either, and there was dribble coming out of his mouth. But no skin broke on his face or bruise you could see—maybe it wouldn't have come up yet. The stuff coming out of his mouth didn't even look like blood. It was pink stuff, and if you wanted to know what it looked like it looked exactly like when the froth comes up when you were boiling the strawberries to make jam. Bright pink. It was smeared over his face from when Rupert had him face down. He made a sound, too, when she was turning him over. *Glug-glug*. That was all there was to it. *Glug-glug* and he was laid out like a stone.

Rupert jumped out of the chair so it was still rocking, and he started picking up all the things and putting each one back where it went in Mr. Willens's box. Getting everything fitted in the way it should go. Wasting the time that way. It was a special box lined with red plush and a place in it for each one of his things that he used and you had to get everything in right or the top wouldn't go down. Rupert got it so the top went on and then he just sat down in the chair again and started pounding on his knees.

On the table there was one of those good-for-nothing cloths, it was a souvenir of when Rupert's mother and father went up north to see the Dionne Quintuplets. She took it off the table and wrapped it around Mr. Willens's head to soak up the pink stuff and so they wouldn't have to keep on looking at him.

Rupert kept banging his big flat hands. She said, Rupert, we got to bury him somewhere.

Rupert just looked at her, like to say, Why?

She said they could bury him down in the cellar, which had a dirt floor.

"That's right," said Rupert. "Where are we going to bury his car?"

She said they could put it in the barn and cover it up with hay.

He said too many people came poking around the barn.

Then she thought, Put him in the river. She thought of him sitting in his car right under the water. It came to her like a picture. Rupert didn't say anything at first, so she went into the kitchen and got some water and cleaned Mr. Willens up so he wouldn't dribble on anything.

The goo was not coming up in his mouth anymore. She got his keys, which were in his pocket. She could feel, through the cloth of his pants, the fat of his leg still warm.

She said to Rupert, Get moving.

He took the keys.

They hoisted Mr. Willens up, she by the feet and Rupert by the head, and he weighed a ton. He was like lead. But as she carried him one of his shoes kind of kicked her between the legs, and she thought, There you are, you're still at it, you horny old devil. Even his dead old foot giving her the nudge. Not that she ever let him do anything, but he was always ready to get a grab if he could. Like grabbing her leg up under her skirt when he had the thing to her eye and she couldn't stop him and Rupert had to come sneaking in and get the wrong idea.

Over the doorsill and through the kitchen and across the porch and down the porch steps. All clear. But it was a windy day, and, first thing, the wind blew away the cloth she had wrapped over Mr. Willens's face.

Their yard couldn't be seen from the road, that was lucky. Just the peak of the roof and the upstairs window. Mr. Willens's car couldn't be seen.

Rupert had thought up the rest of what to do. Take him to Jutland, where it was deep water and the track going all the way back and it could look like he just drove in from the road and mistook his way. Like he turned off on the Jutland road, maybe it was dark and he just drove into the water before he knew where he was at. Like he just made a mistake.

He did. Mr. Willens certainly did make a mistake.

The trouble was, it meant driving out their lane and along the road to the Jutland turn. But nobody lived down there and it was a dead end after the Jutland turn, so just the half mile or so to pray you never met anybody. Then Rupert would get Mr. Willens over in the driver's seat and push the car right off down the bank into the water. Push the whole works down into the pond. It was going to be a job to do that, but Rupert at least was a strong bugger. If he hadn't been so strong they wouldn't have been in this mess in the first place.

Rupert had a little trouble getting the car started because he had never driven one like that, but he did, and got turned around and drove off down the lane with Mr. Willens kind of bumping over against him. He had put Mr. Willens's hat on his head—the hat that had been sitting on the seat of the car.

Why take his hat off before he came into the house? Not just to be polite but so he could easier get a clutch on her and kiss her. If you could call that kissing, all that pushing up against her with the box still in one hand and the other grabbing on, and sucking away at her with his dribbly old mouth. Sucking and chewing away at her lips and her tongue and pushing himself up at her and the corner of the box sticking into her and digging her behind. She was so surprised and he got such a hold she didn't know how to get out of it. Pushing and sucking and dribbling and digging into her and hurting her all at the same time. He was a dirty old brute.

She went and got the Quintuplets cloth where it had blown on to the fence. She looked hard for blood on the steps

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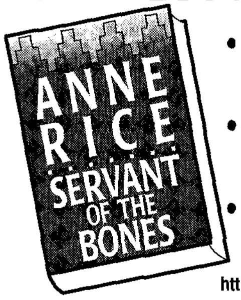
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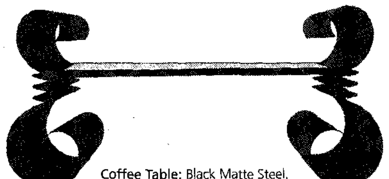
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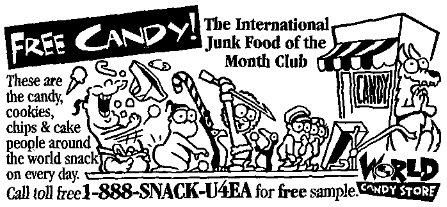
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or any mess on the porch or through the kitchen, but all she found was in the front room, also some on her shoes. She scrubbed up what was on the floor and scrubbed her shoes, which she took off, and not till she had all that done did she see a smear right down her front. How did she come by that? And the same time she saw it she heard a noise that turned her to stone. She heard a car and it was a car she didn't know and it was coming down the lane.

She looked through the net curtain and sure enough. A new-looking car and dark green. Her smeared-down front and shoes off and the floor wet. She moved back where she couldn't be seen, but she couldn't think of where to hide. The car stopped and a car door opened, but the engine didn't cut off. She heard the door shut and then the car turned around and she heard the sound of it driving back up the lane. And she heard Lois and Sylvie on the porch.

It was the teacher's boyfriend's car. He picked up the teacher every Friday afternoon, and this was a Friday. So the teacher said to him, Why don't we give these ones a lift home, they're the littlest and they got the farthest to go and it looks like it's going to rain.

It did rain, too. It had started by the time Rupert got back, walking home along the riverbank. She said, A good thing, it'll muddy up your tracks where you went to push it over. He said he'd took his shoes off and worked in his sock feet. So you must have got your brains going again, she said.

Instead of trying to soak the stuff out of that souvenir cloth or the blouse she had on, she decided to burn the both of them in the stove. They made a horrible smell and the smell made her sick. That was the whole beginning of her being sick. That and the paint. After she cleaned up the floor, she could still see where she thought there was a stain, so she got the brown paint left over from when Rupert painted the steps and she painted over the whole floor. That started her throwing up, leaning over and breathing in that paint. And the pains in her back—that was the start of them, too.

After she got the floor painted she just about quit going into the front room. But one day she thought she had better put some other cloth on that table. It would make things look more normal. If she didn't, then her sister-in-law was sure to come nosing around and say, Where's that cloth Mom and Dad brought back the time they went to see the Quints? If she had a different cloth on she could say, Oh, I just felt like a change. But no cloth would look funny.

So she got a cloth Rupert's mother had embroidered with flower baskets and took it in there and she could still smell the smell. And there on the table was sitting the dark-red box with Mr. Willens's things in it and his name on it and it had been sitting there all the time. She didn't even remember putting it there or seeing Rupert put it there. She had forgot all about it.

She took that box and hid it in one place and then she hid it in another. She never told where she hid it and she wasn't going to. She would have smashed it up, but how do you smash all those things in it? Examining things. Oh, Missus, would you like me to examine your eyes for you, just sit down here and just you relax and you just shut the one eye and keep the other one wide open. Wide open, now. It was like the same game every time, and she wasn't supposed to suspect what was going on, and when he had the thing out looking in her eye he wanted her to keep her panties on, him the dirty old cuss puffing away getting his fingers slicked in and puffing away. Her not supposed to say anything till he stops and gets the looker thing packed up in his box and all and then she's supposed to say, "Oh, Mr. Willens, now, how much do I owe you for today?"

And that was the signal for him to get her down and thump her like an old billy goat. Right on the bare floor to knock her up and down and try to bash her into pieces. Dingey on him like a blowtorch.

How'd you've liked that?

Then it was in the papers. Mr. Willens found drowned.

They said his head got bunged up knocking against the steering wheel. They said he was alive when he went in the water. What a laugh.

IV. LIES

ENID stayed awake all night—she didn't even try to sleep. She could not lie down in Mrs. Quinn's room. She sat in the kitchen for hours. It was an effort for her to move, even to make a cup of tea or go to the bathroom. Mov-

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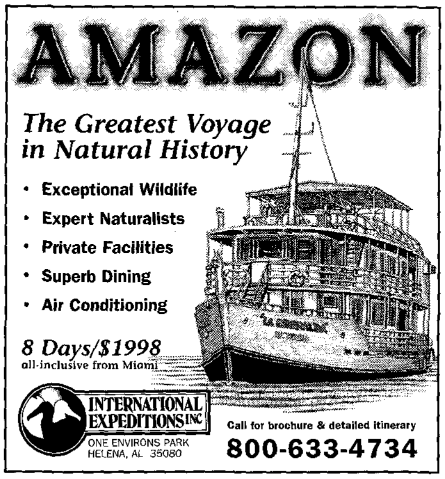
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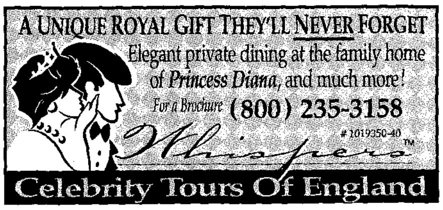
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A Vacation To Remember

ing her body shook up the information that she was trying to arrange in her head and get used to. She had not undressed, or unrolled her hair, and when she brushed her teeth she seemed to be doing something laborious and unfamiliar. The moonlight came through the kitchen window—she was sitting in the dark—and she watched a patch of light shift through the night, on the linoleum, and disappear. She was surprised by its disappearance and then by the birds waking up, the new day starting. The night had seemed so long and then too short, because nothing had been decided.

She got up stiffly and unlocked the door and sat on the porch in the beginning light. Even that move jammed her thoughts together. She had to sort through them again and set them on two sides. What had happened—or what she had been told had happened—on one side. What to do about it on the other. What to do about it—that was what would not come clear to her.

The cows had been moved out of the little meadow between the house and the riverbank. She could open the gate if she wanted to and go in that direction. She knew that she should go back, instead, and check on Mrs. Quinn. But she found herself pulling open the gate bolt.

The cows hadn't cropped all the weeds. Sopping wet, they brushed against her stockings. The path was clear, though, under the riverbank trees, those big willows with the wild grape hanging on to them like monkeys' shaggy arms. Mist was rising so that you could hardly see the river. You had to fix your eyes, concentrate, and then a spot of water would show through, quiet as water in a pot. There must be a moving current, but she could not find it.

Then she saw a movement, and it wasn't in the water. There was a boat moving. Tied to a branch, a plain old rowboat was being lifted very slightly, lifted and let fall. Now that she had found it, she kept watching it, as if it could say something to her. And it did. It said something gentle and final.

You know. You know.

When the children woke up they found her in bountiful good spirits, freshly washed and dressed and with her hair loose. She had already made the jello crammed with fruit that would be ready for them to eat at noon. And she was mixing batter for cookies that could be baked before it got too hot to use the oven.

"Is that your father's boat?" she said. "Down on the river?"

Lois said yes. "But we're not supposed to play in it." Then she said, "If you went down with us we could." They had caught on at once to the day's air of privilege, its holiday possibilities, Enid's unusual mix of languor and excitement.

"We'll see," said Enid. She wanted to make the day a special one for them, special aside from the fact—which she was already almost certain of—that it would be the day of their mother's death. She wanted them to hold something in their minds that could throw a redeeming light on whatever came later. On herself, that is, and whatever way she would affect their lives later.

That morning Mrs. Quinn's pulse had been hard to find and she had not been able, apparently, to raise her head or open her eyes. A great change from yesterday, but Enid was not surprised. She had thought that great spurt of energy, that wicked outpouring talk, would be the last. She held a spoon with water in it to Mrs. Quinn's lips, and Mrs. Quinn drew a little of the water in. She made a mewing sound—the last trace, surely, of all her complaints. Enid did not call the doctor, because he was due to visit anyway later that day, probably early in the afternoon.

She shook up soapsuds in a jar and bent a piece of wire, and then another piece, to make bubble wands. She showed the children how to make bubbles, blowing steadily and carefully until as large a shining bladder as possible trembled on the wire, then shaking it delicately free. They chased the bubbles around the yard and kept them afloat till breezes caught them and hung them in the trees or on the eaves of the porch. What kept them alive then seemed to be the cries of admiration, screams of joy, rising up from below. Enid put no restriction on the noise they could make, and when the soapsud mixture was all used up she made more.

The doctor called when she was giving the children their lunch—jello and a plate of cookies sprinkled with colored sugar and glasses of milk into which she had stirred chocolate syrup. He said he had been held up by a child's falling out of a tree and he would probably not be out before suppertime. Enid said softly, “I think she may be going.”

“Well, keep her comfortable if you can,” the doctor said. “You know how as well as I do.”

Enid didn’t phone Mrs. Green. She knew that Rupert would not be back yet from the auction and she didn’t think that Mrs. Quinn, if she ever had another moment of consciousness, would want to see or hear her sister-in-law in the room. Nor did it seem likely that she would want to see her children. And there would be nothing good about seeing her for them to remember.

She didn’t bother trying to take Mrs. Quinn’s blood pressure anymore, or her temperature—just sponged off her face and arms and offered the water, which was no longer noticed. She turned on the fan, whose noise Mrs. Quinn had so often objected to. The smell rising from the body seemed to be changing, losing its ammoniac sharpness. Changing into the common odor of death.

She went out and sat on the steps. She took off her shoes and stockings and stretched out her legs in the sun. The children began cautiously to pester her, asking if she would take them down to the river, if they could sit in the boat, or if they found the oars could she take them rowing. She knew enough not to go that far in the way of desertion, but she asked them, Would they like to have a swimming pool? Two swimming pools? And she brought out the two laundry tubs, set them on the grass, and filled them with water from the cistern pump. They stripped to their underpants and lolled in the water, becoming Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose.

“What do you think,” said Enid, sitting on the grass with her head back and her eyes shut—“what do you think, if a person does something very bad, do they have to be punished?”

“Yes,” said Lois immediately. “They have to get a licking.”

“Who did it?” said Sylvie.

“Just thinking of anybody,” said Enid. “Now, what if it was a very bad thing but nobody knew they did it? Should they tell that they did and be punished?”

Sylvie said, “I would know they did it.”

“You would not,” said Lois. “How would you know?”

“I would’ve seed them.”

“You would not.”

“You know the reason I think they should be punished?” Enid said. “It’s because of how bad they are going to feel, in themselves. Even if nobody did see them and nobody ever knew. If you do something very bad and you are not punished you feel worse, you feel far worse, than if you are.”

“Lois stold a green comb,” Sylvie said.

“I did not,” said Lois.

“I want you to remember that,” Enid said.

Lois said, “It was just laying the side the road.”

Enid went into the sickroom every half hour or so to wipe Mrs. Quinn’s face and hands with a damp cloth. She never spoke to her and never touched her hand, except with the cloth. She had never absented herself like this before with anybody who was dying. When she opened the door at around half past five she knew there was nobody alive in the room. The sheet was pulled out and Mrs. Quinn’s head was hanging over the side of the bed, a fact that Enid did not record or mention to anybody. She had the body straightened out and cleaned and the bed put to rights before the doctor came. The children were still playing in the yard.

“July 5. Rain early A.M. L. and S. playing under porch. Fan off and on, complains noise. Half cup eggnog spoon at a time. B.P. up, pulse rapid, no complaints pain. Rain didn’t cool off much. R.Q. in evening. Hay finished.

“July 6. Hot day, vy. close. Try fan but no. Sponge often. R.Q. in evening. Start to cut wheat tomorrow. Everything 1 or 2 wks ahead due to heat, rain.

“July 7. Cont’d heat. Won’t take eggnog. Ginger ale from spoon. Vy. weak. Heavy rain last night, wind. R.Q. not able to cut, grain lodged some places.

“July 8. No eggnog. Ginger ale. Vomiting A.M. More alert. R.Q. to go to calf auction, gone 2 days. Dr. says go ahead.

“July 9. Vy. agitated. Terrible talk.

“July 10. Patient Mrs. Rupert (Jeanette) Quinn died today approx. 5 P.M. Heart failure due to uremia. (Glomerulonephritis.)”

Enid never made a practice of waiting around for the funerals of people she had nursed. It seemed to her a good idea to get out of the house as soon as she decently could. Her presence could

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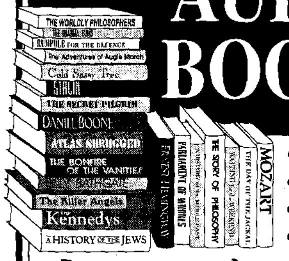

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not help being a reminder of the time just before the death, which might have been dreary and full of physical disaster, and was now going to be glossed over with ceremony and hospitality and flowers and cakes.

Also, there was usually some female relative who would be in place to take over the household completely, putting Enid suddenly in the position of unwanted guest.

Mrs. Green, in fact, arrived at the Quinns' house before the undertaker did. Rupert was not back yet. The doctor was in the kitchen drinking a cup of tea and talking to Enid about another case that she could take up now that this was finished. Enid was hedging, saying that she had thought of taking some time off. The children were upstairs. They had been told that their mother had gone to Heaven, which for them had put the cap on this rare and eventful day.

Mrs. Green was shy until the doctor left. She stood at the window to see him turn his car around and drive away. Then she said, "Maybe I shouldn't say it right now, but I will. I'm glad it happened now and not later when the summer was over and they were started back to school. Now I'll have time to get them used to living at our place and used to the idea of the new school they'll be going to. Rupert, he'll have to get used to it, too."

This was the first time that Enid had realized that Mrs. Green meant to take the children to live with her, not just to stay for a while. Mrs. Green was eager to manage the move, had been looking forward to it, probably, for some time. Very likely she had the children's rooms ready and material bought to make them new clothes. She had a large house and no children of her own.

"You must be wanting to get off home yourself," she said to Enid. As long as there was another woman in the house it might look like a rival home, and it might be harder for her brother to see the necessity of moving the children out for good. "Rupert can run you in when he gets here."

Enid said that it was all right, her mother was coming out to pick her up.

"Oh, I forgot your mother," said Mrs. Green. "I forgot about that snappy little car."

She brightened up and began to open the cupboard doors, checking on the glasses and the teacups—were they clean for the funeral?

"Somebody's been busy," she said, quite relieved about Enid now and ready to be complimentary.

Mr. Green was waiting outside, in the truck, with the Greens' dog, General. Mrs. Green called upstairs for Lois and Sylvie, and they came running down with some clothes in brown paper bags. They ran through the kitchen and slammed the door, without taking any notice of Enid.

"That's something that's going to have to change," said Mrs. Green, meaning the door-slamming. Enid could hear the children shouting their greetings to General and General barking excitedly in return.

TWO days later Enid was back, driving her mother's car herself. She came late in the afternoon, when the funeral would have been well over. There were no extra cars parked outside, which meant that the women who had helped in the kitchen had all gone home, taking with them the extra chairs and teacups and the large coffeepot that belonged to their church. The grass was marked with car tracks and some dropped crushed flowers.

She had to knock on the door now. She had to wait to be asked in.

She heard Rupert's heavy, steady footsteps. She spoke some greeting to him when he stood in front of her on the other side of the screen door, but she didn't look into his face. He was in his shirtsleeves, but was wearing his suit trousers. He undid the hook of the door.

"I wasn't sure anybody would be here," Enid said. "I thought you might still be at the barn."

Rupert said, "They all pitched in with the chores."

She could smell whiskey when he spoke, but he didn't sound drunk.

"I thought you were one of the women come back to collect something you forgot," he said.

Enid said, "I didn't forget anything. I was just wondering, how are the children?"

"They're fine. They're at Olive's."

It seemed uncertain whether he was going to ask her in. It was bewilderment that stopped him, not hostility. She had not prepared herself for this first awkward part of the conversation. So that she wouldn't have to look at him, she looked around at the sky.

"You can feel the evenings getting shorter," she said. "Even if it isn't a month since the longest day."

"That's true," said Rupert. Now he opened the door and stood aside and she went in. On the table was a cup without a saucer. She sat down at the opposite side of the table from where he had been sitting. She was wearing a dark-green silk-crêpe dress and suède shoes to match. When she put these things on she had thought how this might be the last time that she would dress herself and the last clothes she would ever wear. She had done her hair up in a French braid and powdered her face. Her care, her vanity, seemed foolish but were necessary to her. She had been awake now three nights in a row, awake every minute, and she had not been able to eat, even to fool her mother.

"Was it specially difficult this time?" her mother had said. She hated discussion of illness or deathbeds, and the fact that she had brought herself to ask this meant that Enid's upset was obvious.

"Was it the children you'd got fond of?" her mother said. "The poor little monkeys."

Enid said it was just the problem of settling down after a long case, and a hopeless case of course had its own strain. She did not go out of her mother's house in the daytime, but she did go for walks at night, when she could be sure of not meeting anybody and having to talk. She had found herself walking past the walls of the county jail. She knew there was a prison yard behind those walls where hangings had once taken place. But not for years and years. They must do it in some large central prison now, when they had to do it. And it was a long time since anybody from this community had committed a sufficiently serious crime.

SITTING across the table from Rupert, facing the door of Mrs. Quinn's room, she had almost forgotten her excuse, lost track of the way things were to go. She felt her purse in her lap, the weight of her camera in it—that reminded her.

"There is one thing I'd like to ask you," she said. "I thought I might as well now, because I wouldn't get another chance."

Rupert said, "What's that?"

"I know you've got a rowboat. So I wanted to ask you to row me out to the middle of the river. And I could get a picture. I'd like to get a picture of the riverbank. It's beautiful there, the willow trees along the bank."

"All right," said Rupert, with the careful lack of surprise that country people will show, regarding the frivolity—the rudeness, even—of visitors.

That was what she was now—a visitor.

Her plan was to wait until they got out to the middle of the river, then to tell him that she could not swim. First ask him how deep he thought the water would be there—and he would surely say, after all the rain they had been having, that it might be seven or eight, or even ten, feet. Then tell him that she could not swim. And that would not be a lie. She had grown up in Walley, on the lake, she had played on the beach every summer of her childhood, she was a strong girl and good at games, but she was frightened of the water, and no coaxing or demonstrating or shaming had ever worked with her—she had not learned to swim.

He would only have to give her a shove with one of the oars and topple her into the water and let her sink. Then leave the boat out on the water and swim to shore, change his clothes, and say that he had come in from the barn or from a walk and found the car there, and where was she? Even the camera if found would make it more plausible. She had taken the boat out to get a picture, then somehow fallen into the river.

Once he understood his advantage, she would tell him. She would ask, Is it true?

If it was not true, he would hate her for asking. If it was true—and didn't she believe all the time that it was true?—he would hate her in another, more dangerous way. Even if she said at once—and meant it, she would mean it—that she was never going to tell.

She would speak very quietly all the time, remembering how voices carry out on the water on a summer evening.

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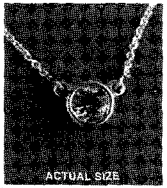

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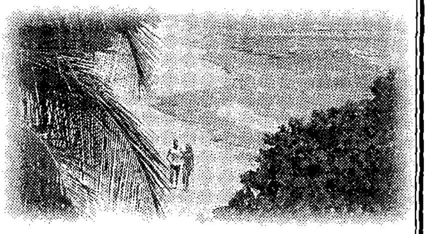

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a burden. You will not be able to stand your life.

If she had got so far, and he had neither denied what she said nor pushed her into the river, Enid would know that she had won the gamble. It would take some more talking, more absolutely firm but quiet persuasion to bring him to the point where he would start to row back to shore.

Or, lost, he would say "What will I do?" and she would take him one step at a time, saying first, "Row back."

The first step in a long, dreadful journey. She would tell him every step and she would stay with him for as many of them as she could. Tie up the boat now. Walk up the bank. Walk through the meadow. Open the gate. She would walk behind him or in front, whichever seemed better to him. Across the yard and up the porch and into the kitchen.

They will say goodbye and get into their separate cars and then it will be his business where he goes. And she will not phone the Police Office the next day. She will wait and they will phone her and she will go to see him in jail. Every day, or as often as they will let her, she will sit and talk to him in jail, and she will write him letters as well. If they take him to another jail she will go there; even if she is allowed to see him only once a month she will be close by. And in court—yes, every day in court, she will be sitting where he can see her.

She does not think anyone would get a death sentence for this sort of murder, which was in a way accidental, and was surely a crime of passion, but the shadow is there, to sober her when she feels that these pictures of devotion, of a bond that is like love but beyond love, are becoming indecent.

Now it has started. With her asking to be taken on the river, her excuse of the picture. Both she and Rupert are standing up, and she is facing the door of the sickroom—now again the front room—which is shut.

She says a foolish thing.

"Are the quilts taken down off the windows?"

He doesn't seem to know for a minute what she is talking about. Then he says, "The quilts. Yes. I think it was Olive took them down. In there was where we had the funeral."

"I was only thinking. The sun would fade them."

He opens the door and she comes around the table and they stand looking into the room. He says, "You can go in if you like. It's all right. Come in."

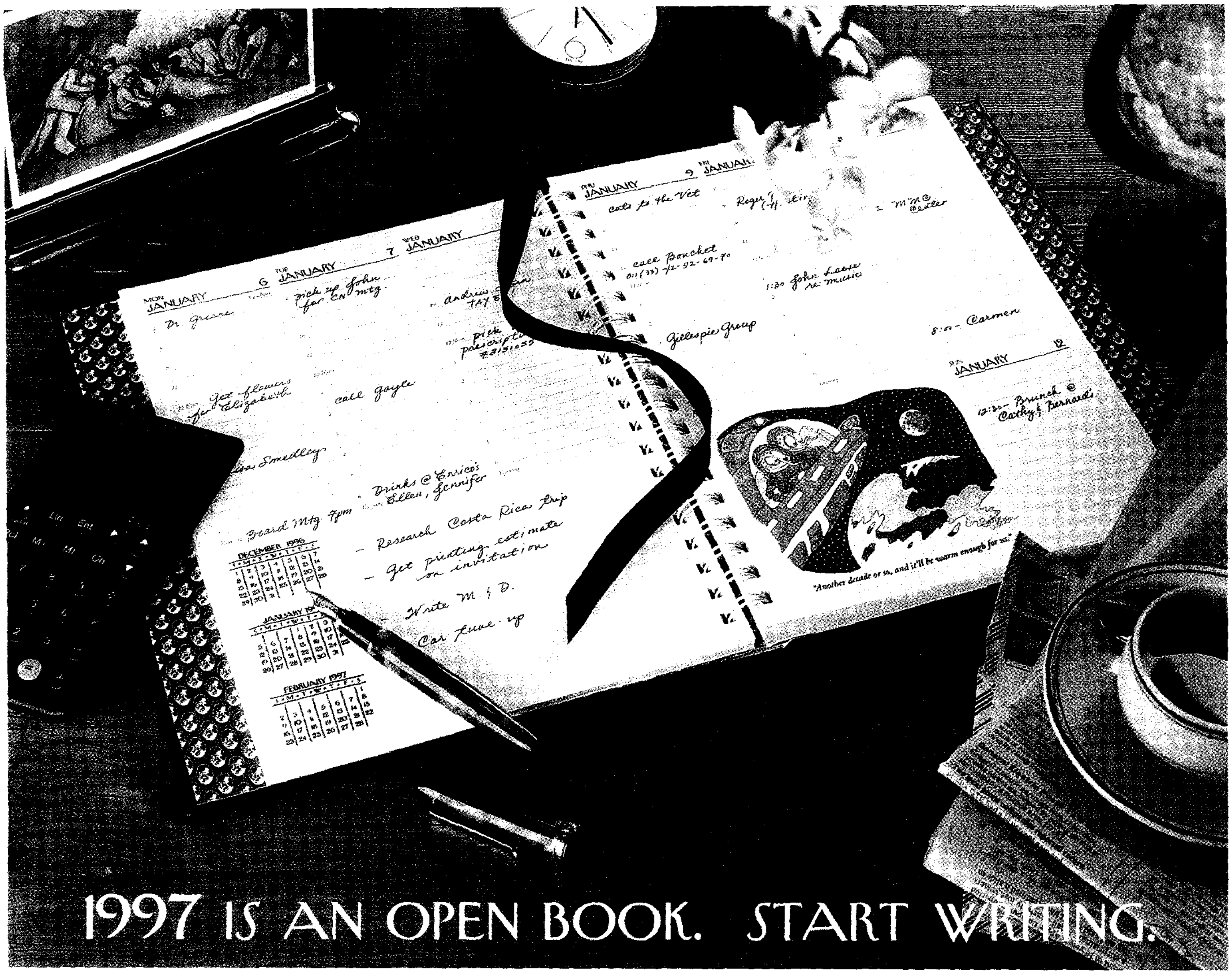
The bed is gone, of course. The furniture is pushed back against the walls. The middle of the room, where they would have set up the chairs for the funeral, is bare. So is the space in between the north windows—that must have been where they put the coffin. The table where Enid was used to setting the basin, and laying out cloths, cotton wool, spoons, medicine, is jammed into a corner and has a bouquet of delphiniums sitting on it. The tall windows still hold plenty of daylight.

"Lies" is the word that Enid can hear now, out of all the words that Mrs. Quinn said in that room. *Lies. I bet it's all lies.*

COULD a person make up something so detailed and diabolical? The answer is yes. A sick person's mind, a dying person's mind, could fill up with all kinds of trash and organize that trash in a most convincing way. Enid's own mind, when she was asleep in this room, had filled up with the most disgusting inventions, with filth. Lies of that nature could be waiting around in the corners of a person's mind, hanging like bats in the corners, waiting to take advantage of any kind of darkness. You can never say, Nobody could make that up. Look how elaborate dreams are, layer over layer in them, so that the part you can remember and put into words is just the bit you can scratch off the top.

When Enid was four or five years old she had told her mother that she had gone into her father's office and that she had seen him sitting behind his desk with a woman on his knee. All she could remember about this woman, then and now, was that she wore a hat with a great many flowers on it and a veil (a hat quite out of fashion even at that time), and that her blouse or dress was unbuttoned and there was one bare breast sticking out, the tip of it disappearing into Enid's father's mouth. She had told her mother about this in perfect certainty that she had seen it. She said, "One of her fronts was stuck in Daddy's mouth." She did not know the word for breasts, though she did know they came in pairs.

Her mother said, "Now, Enid. What are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Get flowers for Elizabeth
call Gayle
Board Mtg 7pm
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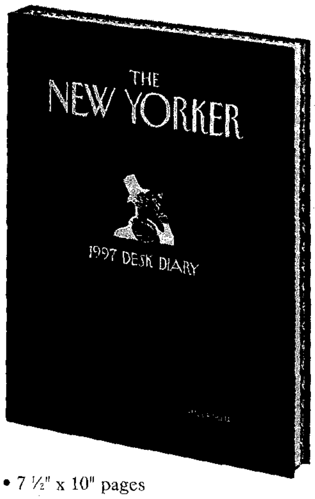
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you talking about? What on earth is a front?"

"Like an ice-cream cone," Enid said.

And she saw it that way, exactly. She could see it that way still. The biscuit-colored cone with its mound of vanilla ice cream squashed against the woman's chest and the wrong end sticking into her father's mouth.

Her mother then did a very unexpected thing. She undid her own dress and took out a dull-skinned object that flopped over her hand. "Like this?" she said.

Enid said no. "An ice-cream cone," she said.

"Then that was a dream," her mother said. "Dreams are sometimes downright silly. Don't tell Daddy about it. It's too silly."

Enid did not believe her mother right away, but in a year or so she saw that such an explanation had to be right, because ice-cream cones did not ever arrange themselves in that way on ladies' chests and they were never so big. When she was older still she realized that the hat must have come from some picture.

Lies.

SHE hadn't asked him yet, she hadn't spoken. Nothing yet committed her to asking. It was still *before*. Mr. Willens had still driven himself into Jutland Pond, on purpose or by accident. Everybody still believed that, and as far as Rupert was concerned Enid believed it, too. And as long as that was so, this room and this house and her life held a different possibility, an entirely different possibility from the one she had been living with (or glorying in—however you wanted to put it) for the last few days. The different possibility was coming closer to her, and all she needed to do was to keep quiet and let it come. Through her silence, her collaboration in a silence, what benefits could bloom. For others, and for herself.

This was what most people knew. A simple thing that it had taken her so long to understand. This was how to keep the world habitable.

She had started to weep. Not with grief but with an onslaught of relief that she had not known she was looking for. Now she looked into Rupert's face and saw that his eyes were bloodshot and the skin around them puckered and dried out, as if he had been weeping, too.

He said, "She wasn't lucky in her life."

Enid excused herself and went to get her handkerchief, which was in her purse on the table. She was embarrassed now that she had dressed herself up in readiness for such a melodramatic fate.

"I don't know what I was thinking of," she said. "I can't walk down to the river in these shoes."

Rupert shut the door of the front room.

"If you want to go we can still go," he said. "There ought to be a pair of rubber boots would fit you somewhere."

Not hers, Enid hoped. No. Hers would be too small.

Rupert opened a bin in the woodshed, just outside the kitchen door. Enid had never looked into that bin. She had thought it contained firewood, which she had certainly had no need of that summer. Rupert lifted out several single rubber boots and even snow boots, trying to find a pair.

"These look like they might do," he said. "They maybe were Mother's. Or even mine before my feet got full size."

He pulled out something that looked like a piece of a tent, then, by a broken strap, an old school satchel.

"Forgot all the stuff that was in here," he said, letting these things fall back and throwing the unusable boots on top of them. He dropped the lid and gave a private, grieved, and formal-sounding sigh.

A house like this, lived in by one family for so long a time, and neglected for the past several years, would have plenty of bins, drawers, shelves, suitcases, trunks, crawl spaces full of things that it would be up to Enid to sort out, saving and labelling some, restoring some to use, sending others by the boxload to the dump. When she got that chance she wouldn't balk at it. She would make this house into a place that had no secrets from her and where all order was as she had decreed.

He set the boots down in front of her while she was bent over unbuckling her shoes. She smelled under the whiskey the bitter breath that came after a sleepless night and a long harsh day; she smelled the deeply sweat-soaked skin of a hard-worked man that no washing—at least the washing he did—could get quite fresh. No bodily smell—even the smell of semen—was unfamiliar to her, but there was something new and invasive about the smell of a body so distinctly not in her power or under her care.

That was welcome.

"See can you walk," he said.

She could walk. She walked in front of him to the gate. He bent over her shoulder to swing it open for her. She waited while he bolted it, then stood aside to let him walk ahead, because he had brought a little hatchet from the woodshed, to clear their path.

"The cows were supposed to keep the growth down," he said. "But there's things cows won't eat."

She said, "I was only down here once. Early in the morning."

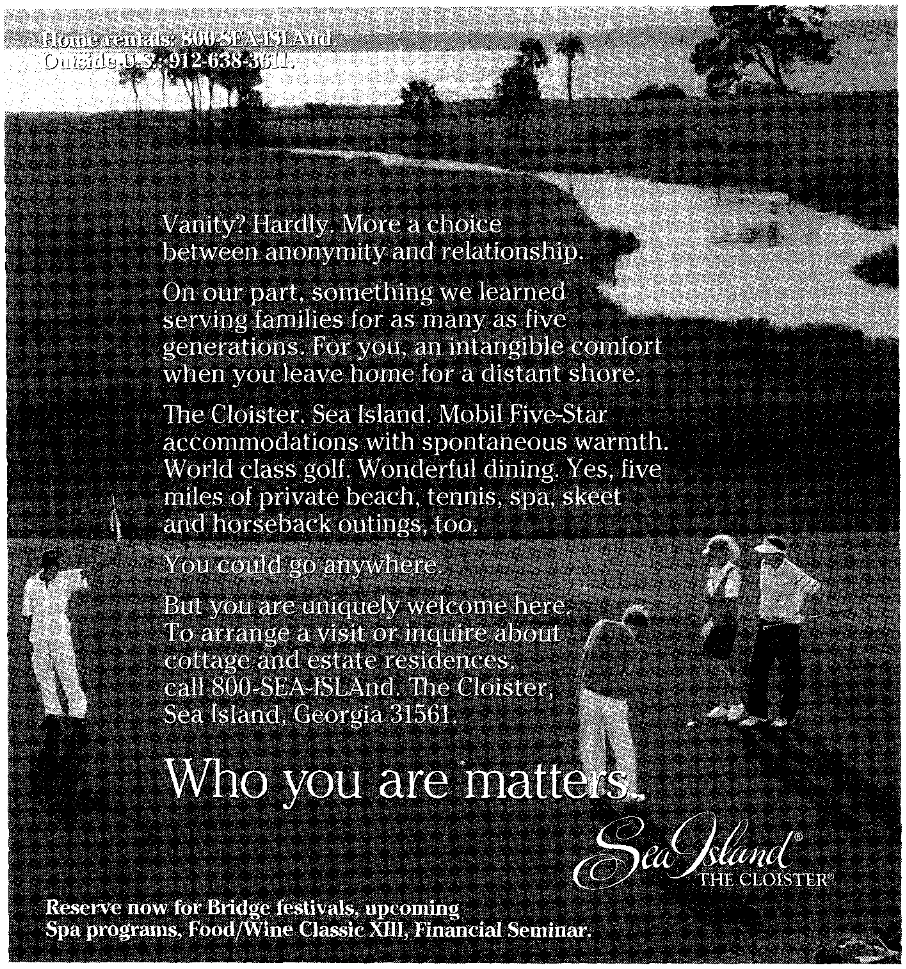
The desperation of her frame of mind then had to seem childish to her now.

Rupert went along chopping at the big fleshy thistles. The sun cast a level, dusty light on the bulk of the trees ahead. The air was clear in some places, then suddenly you would enter a cloud of tiny bugs. Bugs no bigger than specks of dust that were constantly in motion yet kept themselves together in the shape of a pillar or a cloud. How did they manage to do that? And how did they choose one spot over another to do it in? It must have something to do with feeding. But they never seemed to be still enough to feed.

When she and Rupert went underneath the roof of summer leaves it was dusk, it was almost night. You had to watch that you didn't trip over roots that swelled up out of the path, or hit your head on the dangling, surprisingly tough-stemmed vines. Then a flash of water came through the black branches. The lit-up water near the opposite bank of the river, the trees over there still decked out in light. On this side—they were going down the bank now, through the willows—the water was tea-colored but clear.

And the boat waiting, riding in the shadows, just the same.

"The oars are hid," said Rupert. He went into the willows to locate them. In a moment she lost sight of him. She went closer to the water's edge, where her boots sank into the mud a little and held her. If she tried to, she could still hear Rupert's movements in the bushes. But if she concentrated on the motion of the boat, a slight and secretive motion, she could feel as if everything for a long way around had gone quiet. ◆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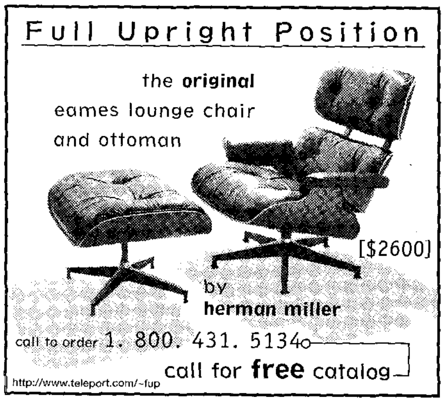
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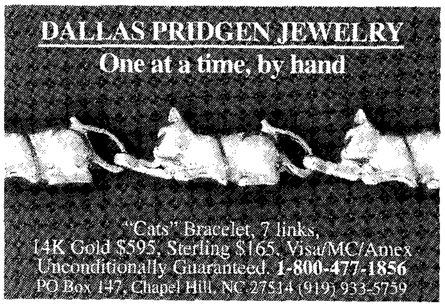
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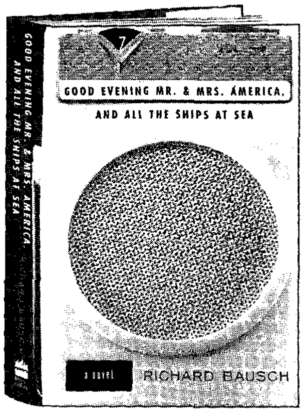
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FINE POINTS

Why we should still care about Fowler seventy years on.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

THE anonymous jacket designer for "The New Fowler's Modern English Usage," edited by R. W. Burchfield (Oxford; $25), shows a cunning grasp of typographical politics. The headlined, selling word is "Fowler's," italicized, white on black, and measuring at full height an inch and a quarter. The word "New" is very discreetly tucked between the "F" and the "l," in thin caps three-eighths of an inch high and tinted a receding blue. The words "Modern English Usage," five-eighths of an inch high, appear in silver on a blue band that brightly suggests first-prize-winning status; the type recalls that used, rather dowdily, on the first edition of H. W. Fowler's famous reference work of 1926, whose full title was "A Dictionary of Modern English Usage." Below the blue band we read, in letters not more than a quarter the size of those spelling "Fowler's," the words "Third Edition" and "Edited by R. W. Burchfield." It is only upon penetrating to the fifth page of Burchfield's preface that we discover that this "Fowler" is Fowler in name only, or almost only: "Fowler's name remains on the title-page, even though his book has been largely rewritten in this third edition." Burchfield in his preface has come not to praise but to bury his fabled predecessor. His pious graveside elegy even offers suggestions on the embalming:

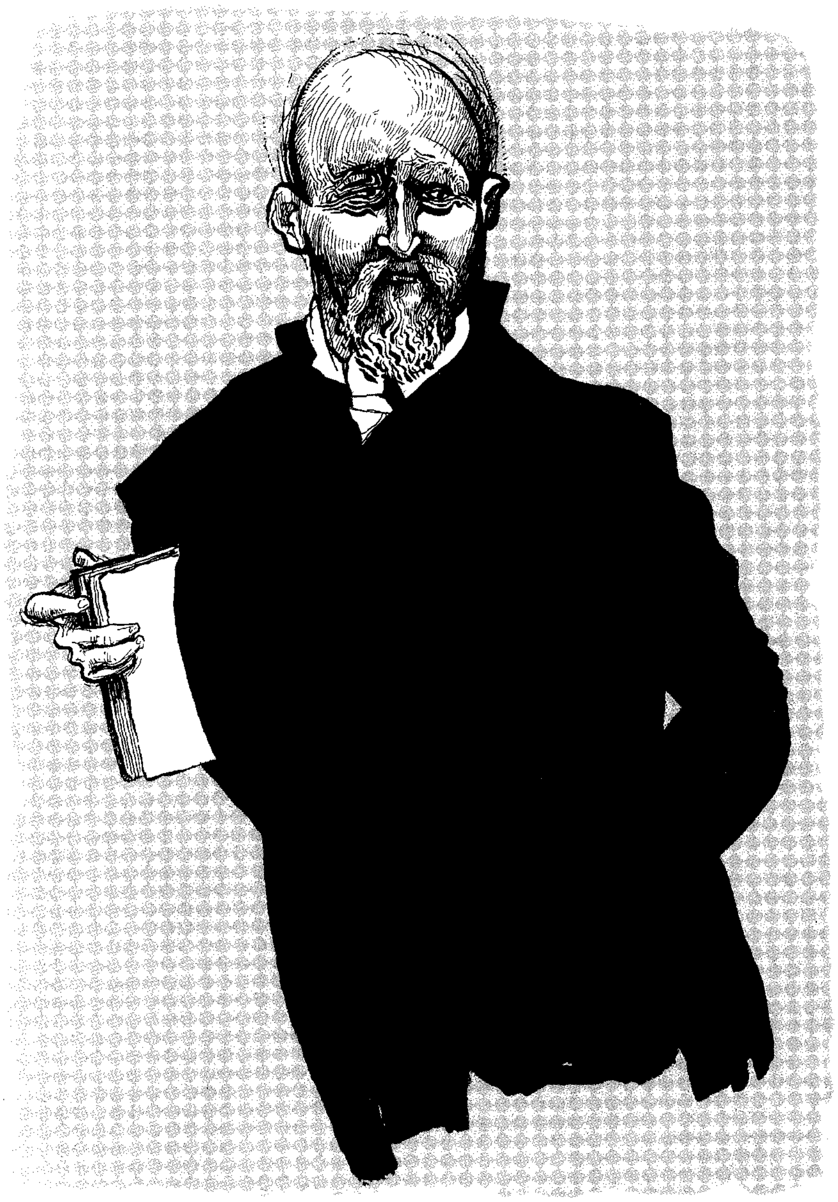
> I hope that a way will be found to keep the 1926 masterpiece in print for at least another seventy years. . . . It is not, of course, as antiquated as Ælfric's Grammar nor yet as those of Ben Jonson or Robert Lowth. But it is a fossil all the same, and an enduring monument to all that was linguistically acceptable in the standard English of the southern counties of England in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Fowler's revered name may be big on the jacket (and enormous on the spine), but he is cut sharply down to size in Burchfield's revisionary estimate:

> What I want to stress is the isolation of Fowler from the mainstream of the linguistic scholarship of his day, and his heavy dependence on schoolmasterly textbooks in which the rules of grammar, rhetoric, punctuation, spelling, and so on, were set down in a quite basic manner. . . . For his illustrative examples Fowler often turned to the *OED* [the Oxford English Dictionary] and drew on them to support his arguments. Above all, however, he turned to newspapers (though he seldom specifies which ones) because they reflected and revealed the solecistic waywardness of "the half-educated" general public in a much more dramatic fashion than did works of English literature.

Not only was Henry Watson Fowler an isolated and linguistically amateurish former schoolteacher (at Sedbergh School, in northwest Yorkshire, of classics and English, for seventeen years) who revelled in the errors of hurried journalists but, "perhaps as a hangover from [his] days as a schoolmaster, his scholarship needed to be enlivened by a veneer of idiosyncracy and humour." In "The King's English," a 1906 guide to usage which Fowler compiled with his younger brother, Francis George Fowler, various issues of syntax and taste were discussed under such frisky heads as "Airs and Graces," "Between Two Stools," and "Wens and Hypertrophied Members." "A Dictionary of Modern English Usage" sports articles titled "False Scent," "Out of the Frying-Pan," and "Pairs and Snares." These academic japes, Burchfield tartly comments, "have endeared the book to Fowler's devotees, but no longer have their interest or appeal and are not preserved in this new edition." Nor are Fowler's system of indicating pronunciation, his crisply prescriptive tone, and a number of entries that Burchfield deemed "quirky, opinionated, and based on inadequate evidence."

In their place Burchfield brings the International Phonetic Alphabet, an extensive computerized access to modern verbal evidence, a "systematic reading of British and American newspapers, periodicals, and fiction of the 1980s and 1990s," and, most important, "an historical approach to English usage." Born in New Zealand in 1923, Burchfield held academic positions at Oxford before becoming chief editor of the Oxford English dictionaries. As a historian of the language, he is a pragmatic relativist who believes "Judgements based on the distribution of competing constructions or pronunciations are intrinsically fragile and diminished in value if the constructions are not also examined historically."



Henry Watson Fowler: cataloguer of grammatical sins.

How does his historical, descriptive approach differ from that of the 1926 Fowler when both are consulted on some still smarting sore points of usage? Under the entry "mutual," Fowler calls the word "a well-known trap" and says, "The essence of its meaning is that it involves the relation, *x* is or does to *y* as *y* to *x;* & not the relation, *x* is or does to *z* as *y* to *z.*" Quoting the phrase "the mutual enemy," he admonishes firmly, "In such places *common* is the right word, & the use of *m.* betrays ignorance of its meaning." Burchfield, after quoting Fowler, Evelyn Waugh, and other dogmatists on this issue, points out that "the other sense of *mutual,* namely 'pertaining to both parties, common,' has also been in unbroken use since the late 16c. (Shakespeare)" and that the phrase "our mutual friend" appeared long before Dickens's novel of that name.

Under the entry "include) (comprise," Fowler considers "comprise" a stylish word that "the inferior kind of journalist" uses when "include" would do—that is, when there is no inclusion of "the content of the whole." "Compose," of course, has an opposite sense: all the parts compose the whole, the whole comprises all the parts. Burchfield, having marked the distinction, goes on to cite a number of uses of "comprise" when "compose" was meant, and amiably predicts, "It cannot be denied, however, that the sheer frequency of this construction seems likely to take it out of the disputed area before long." Concerning "purport," Fowler called the use of the verb in the passive "an ugly recent development" and argued against its use with a person ("She purports to find . . ."; "Sir Henry is purported to" . . .). Burchfield throws up his hands:

> *Conclusion.* It would appear that the language is gradually admitting some uses of *purport* not recorded in the *OED* and others that were disliked by Fowler. It is a classic example of a verb continuing to vie for space with its near-synonyms . . . and having a mixed reception from standard speakers as the linguistic battle takes its course.

To Burchfield, the English language is a battlefield upon which he functions as a noncombatant observer. In this capacity, he can be surprisingly lenient. If there is one popular usage generally decried by contemporary grammarians, it is the adverb "hopefully" used in the sense of "it is hoped that"; e.g., "Hopefully, the sun will shine." The usage was so out of bounds in 1926 that Fowler doesn't mention it. But Burchfield points out, in one of his relatively few entries that could be called spirited, that "hopefully" in this sense is a "sentence adverb," employed "to qualify a predication or assertion as a whole." There has been in this century, he observes, "a swift and immoderate increase" in such adverbs; others are "actually, basically, frankly . . . regretfully, strictly, and thankfully." Why, he asks, put "a dunce's cap" on the user of "hopefully" in this sense, when in "Unhappily, there are times when violence is the only way" the adverb is an unobjectionable way of expressing "It is an unhappy fact that . . ."? (One might certainly say, in exact parallel, "Happily, the sun will shine.") Burchfield blinks at the flak in summing up: "Conservative speakers, taken unawares by the sudden expansion of an unrecognized type of construction, have exploded with resentment that is unlikely to fade away before at least the end of the 20c.”

On the frequently deplored use of “nauseous” to mean “nauseated,” he takes cover behind another permissive, precedent-rich authority, “Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage,” whose relevant entry concludes, “Any handbook that tells you that *nauseous* cannot mean ‘nauseated’ is out of touch with the contemporary language.” On the veteran outcast “ain’t,” Burchfield is more than democratic; he pleads the outcast’s case like a left-wing lawyer: “For over 200 years the bar sinister word *ain’t* has been begging for admission to standard English . . . thwarted by the equally bar sinister form *aren’t*. [It] leads a shadowy existence in the language of various underclasses.”

Now and then, Burchfield not merely softens Fowler but openly rebukes him. Fowler’s calling the use of an adjective plus “otherwise” (“agricultural and otherwise”) when “other” is meant “a definite outrage on grammatical principles” appears to Burchfield, seventy years later, excessive: “The language has moved on and the type condemned by Fowler is now in standard use.” In “want[ing] to kick” the non-personal genitive (“the problem’s resolution,” “China’s integrity”) that descends from newspaper headlines into lowercase text, Fowler, Burchfield says, “seemed to be off target.” Under “coastal,” we read in the new Fowler, “Fowler’s objection . . . to this formation as a ‘barbarism’ is a classic example of a lost cause.” Fowler argued that the word should be “costal” (as it still is in medical contexts) to preserve its Latin root, *costa* (rib). For similar reasons of etymological purity, he rejected the negative “a-,” of Greek origin, when attached to stems of Latin origin, as in “asexual” and “amoral,” urging “non-moral” for the latter. But such scruples, along with Fowler’s zealous definitions of increasingly arcane Greek prosodic and rhetorical terms like “acatalectic,” “alcaics,” “anacoluthon,” “anacrusis,” “arsis,” and “hysteron proteron” (all of which Burchfield has decided, “on balance,” to include), belong to a quaint day when Greek and Latin formed the requisite base of a humane education.

LINGUISTICS offers a slippery field for the exercise of moral indignation. Live languages change. A purely descriptive dictionary of usage has the merit of illuminating, as is done on the

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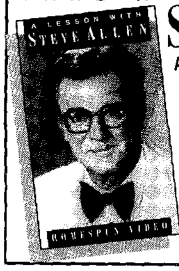

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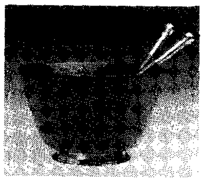

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grandest scale by the O.E.D., the long and winding corridors of recorded usage. And it has the charm, in this age of cultural diversity and politically correct sensitivity, of assuring all users of English that no intelligible usage is absolutely wrong. Use "comprise" and "nauseous" often enough in the unfavored sense, and such a sense gets enrolled in the dictionary. Purists need, perhaps, to be reminded that the English language is a hybrid of exceptional flexibility, variety, and inconsistency. Burchfield's eight hundred and sixty-four double-columned pages attempt, his preface states, "to guide readers to make sensible choices in linguistically controversial areas of words, meanings, grammatical constructions, and pronunciations." Such a modest goal may be the only feasible one. But it proposes no ideal of clarity in language or, beyond that, of grace, which might serve as an instrument of discrimination. It was Fowler's flinty idealism that endeared him to the generations of those who came to consult and stayed to read, with real pleasure, his tireless compilations of slovenly English and his relentlessly logical parsing. He offers a dynamic guidance that promises a brighter future, rather than a helpless wallow in the endless morass of English as it was and is.

"Modern English Usage" was long contemplated. In 1909, Fowler outlined an "idiom dictionary" (a colleague described it as "a Utopian dictionary") as follows:

> We should assume a cheerful attitude of infallibility, & confine ourselves to present-day usage; for instance, we should give no quarter to *masterful* in the sense of *masterly*, as the OED is obliged to do because there is antiquated authority for it, & generally speaking should try to give a shove behind to the process of differentiation.

Differentiation—between such confusable pairs as "admission/admittance," "affect/effect," and "continual/continuous"—was one of his dictionary's main purposes. On the last pair, Fowler is characteristically crisp: "That is *-al* which either is always going on or recurs at short intervals & never comes (or is regarded as never coming) to an end. That is *-ous* in which no break occurs between the beginning & the (not necessarily or even presumably long-deferred) end." Burchfield says, "In practice the distinction is not as neat

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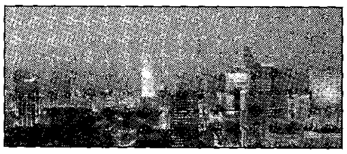

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as that" and conscientiously muddles the issue with instances of what Fowler called "antiquated authority." Burchfield knows that he is revising to death a loved tome; in his preface he defensively raises the question "Why has this schoolmasterly, quixotic, idiosyncratic, and somewhat vulnerable book, in a form only lightly revised once, in 1965, by Ernest Gowers, retained its hold on the imagination of all but professional linguistic scholars?" The question frames its own answer: In our ignorance, we seek schoolmasterly instruction, and are beguiled and entertained when the master displays quixoticism, idiosyncrasy, and vulnerability.

Fowler provided a user's guide for people in the word trade. The founding editor of this magazine, Harold Ross, worked, according to James Thurber, "surrounded by dictionaries, which he constantly consulted, along with one of his favorite books, Fowler's *Modern English Usage*. He learned more grammar and syntax from Fowler than he had ever picked up in his somewhat sketchy school days." But more than grammar and syntax was being inculcated; the dictionary of usage is the child of the Fowler brothers' "The King's English," which on its first page fortifies "any one who wishes to become a good writer" with five precepts:

> Prefer the familiar word to the far-fetched.
> Prefer the concrete word to the abstract.
> Prefer the single word to the circumlocution.
> Prefer the short word to the long.
> Prefer the Saxon word to the Romance.

H. W. Fowler himself practiced these stark preachments, with a resultant style that Gowers called "mathematical rather than literary." But in the narrow dictionary double columns the mathematically precise style is delightfully spiky, tonic, gnomic, and lucid, with a certain metronomic rhythm:

> Now the sobriquet habit is not a thing to be acquired, but a thing to be avoided; & the selection that follows is compiled for the purpose not of assisting but of discouraging it.

More than once, Fowler seeks to cure us with a surfeit: "And now, in order that the reader may leave this disquisition sick to death, as he should be, of the fused participle, a few miscellaneous specimens are offered." A column and a half of bad examples follow—not nearly so many, however, as he provides under

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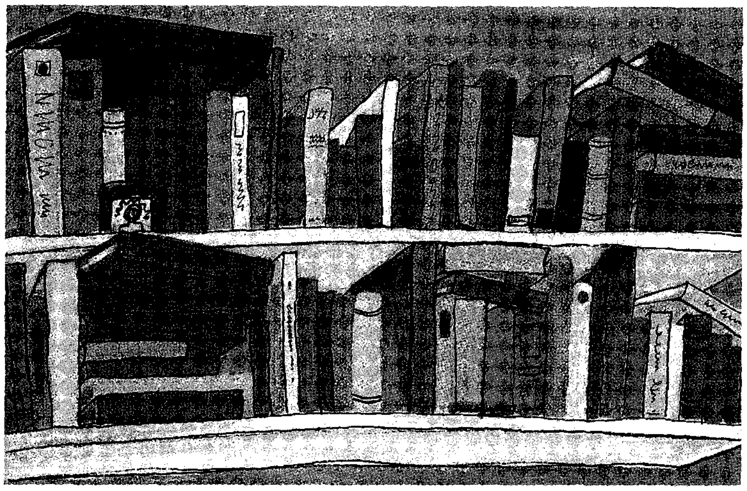
FIRST NOVELS



ELIZA GRAN

THE OTHER FAMILY, by Jacqueline Carey (Random House; $22). In 1966, twelve-year-old Joan's mother deserted her family in order to find herself, only to end up once again playing second fiddle—right down the street—to her manicured, accident-prone sister Iris (now Mrs. Charles Eberlander). Carey has written the opposite of a comedy of manners—a shrewd, witty tragedy of incivilities, narrated by a precocious heroine who notes each grave misstep, each gross misalliance.

MEMORIES OF MY GHOST BROTHER, by Heinz Insu Fenkl (Dutton; $23.95). This coming-of-age novel, set near the DMZ in Korea, gives an unsparing yet fond account of the go-between boyhood of its protagonist, Insu, who is the child of a Korean woman and an American G.I. The author shuttles nimbly between traditions: cinéma-vérité scenes of the Army's camp-follower community alternate with the just-so stories of mountain goblins and fox demons told by Insu's country uncle. The blend of perspectives—of man and boy, of Korean and American, of insider, outsider, and exile—affords an intimate look at a volatile, rarely glimpsed landscape.

THE VIPERS' CLUB, by John H. Richardson (Morrow; $24). The main intention of this satire on cynicism is to puncture the commercial-film industry, but if you've ever had a horrible boss you know the producer Max Fischer. And, like the professor who willingly becomes Max's factotum, you probably also know what it is to pity a monster. A rape and a murder come into the story, not to mention championship bouts of insults, noirish intrigue, and stunning beauties. The book is clever without quite being honest, but, in the manner of Hollywood, it can also be very entertaining.

PIG, by Andrew Cowan (Harcourt, Brace; $21). The notion of England as a drab mass of Council flats is a familiar one, but Cowan's approach is so understated that the absence of cruel jolts, à la "Trainspotting," comes as a shock. Cowan's simple, hushed tale—of fifteen-year-old Danny, his weird devotion to his late grandmother's aged pig, and his nascent love for a bookish Indian girl—is as gauzy as it is concrete: it rises up, cinder block by cinder block, but remains beautifully unreal.

I NEVER CAME TO YOU IN WHITE, by Judith Farr (Houghton Mifflin; $21.95). In this odd, compelling epistolary novel, the author depicts the adolescent Emily Dickinson as she may have appeared to those around her, particularly during the bleak year she spent at Mary Lyon's Female Seminary, in exile from her beloved Amherst. Farr, who is a Dickinson scholar, has a nearly perfect ear: the correspondence she imaginatively transcribes here—peculiar, incandescent, astonishing—rings true.

FIGHT CLUB, by Chuck Palahniuk (Norton; $21). This quick jab of a novel is about the compartmentalized nature of male violence. The narrator is a participant in a late-night basement "fight club"—part of a clandestine pugilistic men's movement organized by his roommate. Their boxers' rebellion ends on top of a skyscraper wired to explode in ten minutes, the roommate's gun in the narrator's mouth—one of more than a few weirdly humorous Freudian touches in a cleanly written first-round book.

IN THE HOLD, by Vladimir Arsenijević, translated, from the Serbo-Croatian, by Celia Hawkesworth (Knopf; $20). A young couple on the cusp between energetic drug use and child rearing live in recognizable slacker style: he naps; she rolls joints; her brother, a Hare Krishna in Reeboks, stops by for breakfast. But in Belgrade in 1991 such domestic bohemianism turns into a survival mechanism. In the presence of daily horror, the narrator adopts a good-natured pessimism ("What I mean is that things were bad, but not so bad that they could not have been a great deal worse"), and the result is both painful and unimaginably comic. (Part of this novel originally appeared in *The New Yorker*.)

INTO THE GREAT WIDE OPEN, by Kevin Canty (Talese/Doubleday; $29.95). Kenny meets Junie during a Liberal Religious Youth weekend—she's escaping self-involved parents; he, a broken, boozing dad. Enamored of her waifish mystique ("Her hair was black, or almost black, and cropped short as a marine's, uneven. Brain damage, electroshock therapy"), he is likewise seduced by her cushioned suburban world: house by Frank Lloyd Wright, beer by Bass. This age-old story of teen-age angst—spiked with sharp observation and awkward sex—blessedly forgoes a fairy-tale finale.

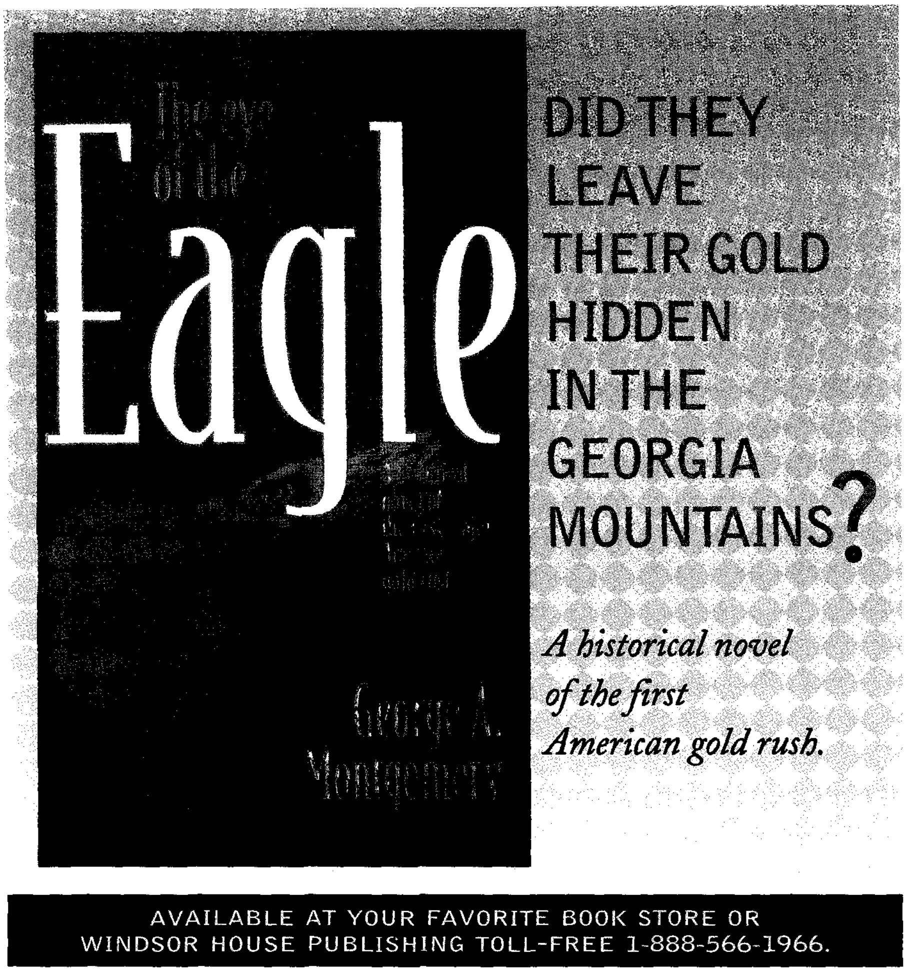
the broad heading of "Elegant Variation," effectuating his "attempt (the main object of this article) to nauseate by accumulation of instances, as sweet-shop assistants are cured of larceny by cloying." Fowler's grammatical morality extends itself, here and there, into political commentary. Under the cool blue light of his differentiation machine, "socialism, communism, anarchism" are drolly arranged as inflections of the same discomfort:

> The things are not mutually exclusive; the words are not an exhaustive threefold division of anything; each stands for a state of things, or a striving after it, that differs much from that which we know; & for many of us, especially those who are comfortably at home in the world as it is, they have consequently come to be the positive, comparative, & superlative, distinguished not in kind but in degree only, of the terms of abuse applicable to those who would disturb our peace.

There is something wry as well as fervid about Fowler as he vigorously tilts at such whirling windmills as "Battered Ornaments," "Misapprehensions," "Mannerisms," "Facetious Formations," "Pomposities," "Superstitions," and "Sturdy Indefensibles"—all of them types of faulty writing arraigned in separate articles in his dictionary. Though so little of a Christian that he left the academic world rather than prepare his charges for confirmation, he shows the methodical zeal of a St. Ignatius of Loyola or a St. Thomas Aquinas. "Unattached Participles," "Unequal Yokefellows," "Poeticisms," "Literary Words," "Needless Variants"—the categories mount into a scholastic encyclopedia of sins, sins against a holy vision of spotless language. He catalogues sins that only the keenest eye and ear could have ferreted out. "Cannibalism," for instance, exposes to our horrified censure sentences wherein "words . . . devour their own kind":

> *The Council of the League shall direct the Members of the League as to which combatant is to be applied the Decree of Non-intercourse. To* has swallowed a *to*, as its way is when employed by AS-*to* writers.

Got that? It should have read "as to to which . . ." "Swapping Horses" deals with an equally insidious subtlety of misuse, "changing a word's sense in the middle of a sentence, by vacillating between two constructions either of which might follow a word legitimately enough, by starting off with a subject that fits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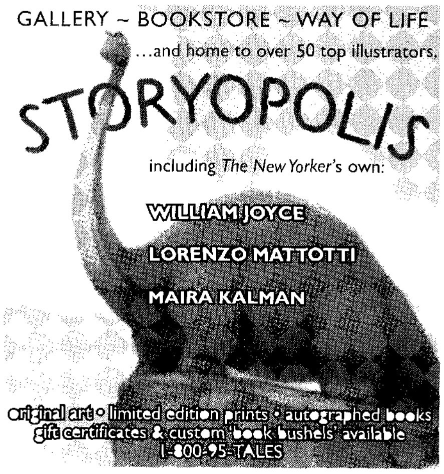
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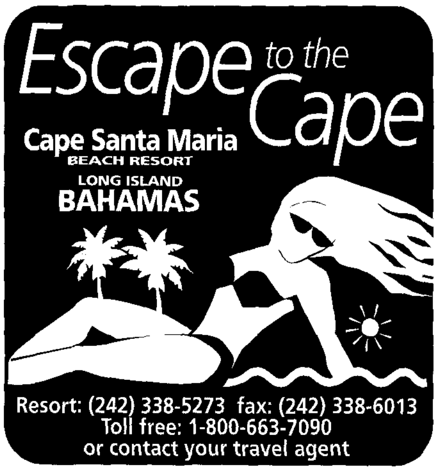
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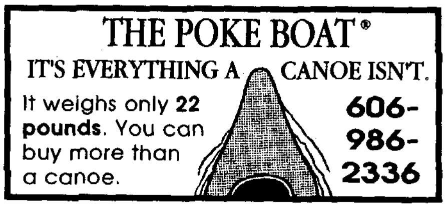
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one verb but must have something tacitly substituted for it to fit another":

> *Viscount Grey's promised speech in the House of Lords on Reparations & inter-Allied debts* furnished *all the* interest *naturally* aroused. *Interest* is here virtually, though not actually, used twice—the speech furnished interest, interest was aroused; but what was furnished was interesting matter, & what was aroused was eager curiosity.

The effect of immersion in Fowler's splendid nitpicking is to make a writer feel entangled in likely—nay, certain—error, and engaged in a hopelessly dirty task. The language is a mess, except as scoured and rinsed and hung out to dry by Fowler. Users are mired in its schizoid mix of Germanic and Romance roots, its notoriously erratic spelling and pronunciation, its vestigial subjunctive, and its tendency, as noted by Dr. Johnson in the preface to *his* dictionary, to modify the meaning of a verb "by a particle subjoined"; Johnson cites "fall in," "bear out," "take off," "give over," and despairingly swears to "innumerable expressions of the same kind, of which some appear wildly irregular, being so far distant from the sense of the simple words, that no sagacity will be able to trace the steps by which they arrived at the present use." No learned academy in the English-speaking world has been able to assume the French Academy's pose as an official guardian of the language; the closest such authority in this country was Noah Webster, and he, like Bernard Shaw and Andrew Carnegie, made himself look cranky by trying to standardize and simplify English spelling. The tools of logic fall afoul of so compounded and shifty an organism as English; Fowler, reasoning from the analogies of "accept," "success," and "coccyx," found "soccer" a misleading spelling and recommended "socker," which would certainly have given the game a different connotation. As is, the players play soccer and the spectators play socker.

Who uses guidebooks? Editors, seeking to impose order and clarity on the torrents of prose that flow through their publications, have recourse to them; any faithful contributor to this magazine has been periodically checked in his outpour by some icy citation from Fowler. Until the editorial thaw of recent years, "contact" and "intrigue" were considered arriviste verbs to be snubbed in these pages, and "located" in both the sense of "found" and the sense of "situated" raised uneasy hackles. Under "hyphens," Burchfield remarks, "*The New Yorker* regularly places hyphens in *teen-age* and *teen-ager;* it is a long time since I last saw a hyphen in these words in works printed in Britain." The purpose of this, an editor once explained to me, was to avoid confusion with the English dialect word "teenage," meaning "brushwood used for fences and hedges." Another editor informed me that the adjective "balding" wouldn't do because its implication that the subject would get balder was unkind. Such beautiful scruples excluded the plentiful coinages of the advertising world; how I struggled, when young and strong, to get the epithet "flavorful" printed here in a short story! The fact seems to be that while writing I rarely consult Fowler or any other guide to usage; I would rather trust my ear and unconsciously acquired sense of the language. John O'Hara, who took an undue pride in his ear, once wrote to his publisher, "Don't cite dictionaries to me, on dialog or the vernacular. Dictionary people consult me, not I them."

Language is first and fundamentally a spoken thing, made and reformed in the daily commerce of men and women. A recurrent thrust of English literary genius, from Shakespeare and Wordsworth to Hemingway and T. S. Eliot, has been to make poetry of the demotic tongue, and to shed archaic forms. Clarity and logicality are not the only virtues of prose; if James Joyce had rested content with the limpid prose of "Dubliners," and not instead explored the margins where mental processes surrender grammar, the vocabulary of fiction would be the poorer. The disciplinarians of language offer little encouragement to the attempt, which needs constant renewal, to find written equivalents for actual experience, in its unparsable, impressionistic complexity.

NOT that Fowler was not, in his day, something of a liberator. He allowed that infinitives should sometimes be split and that sentences could properly end with a preposition. He was not unaware of the impossibility of making English tightly fit Greek and Latin rules. Yet the background of his allowances remains the presumption that language is an instrument for conveying distinct meanings and can be codified to that end. Burchfield's version of "Modern English Usage" communicates a wispier version of Fowler's faith. What Marshall McLuhan called the "electric galaxy" is overwhelming the Gutenbergian niceties.

Magazines and even, under the influence of ever younger copy editors, publishing houses are smoothing away many of the old typographical courtesies. Numbers are no longer spelled out but are given in numerical, indeterminately pronounced forms. Hyphens and commas fall away. The advent of the typewriter and now the computer has diminished the use of diacritical marks to the vanishing point. "Role" instead of "rôle" is perhaps no great loss, or "chateau" instead of "château," but "tete-a-tete" instead of "tête-à-tête" approaches baby talk, and "née" without the accent sticks us with the almost unreadable masculine form "ne." The usage experts should be combatting the loss of any aid to understanding or pronunciation, in a language that leaves us so often adrift: the spread of blandly doubled vowels, as in "cooperate" and "reenter" (as opposed to "co-operate" or "reënter") adds to our burdens, and the dropping of the comma before "and" in a series seems to me a surrender of clarity, giving "red, white and blue" the same rhythm as "tea, bread and butter" or "Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy." Burchfield, no scold, does say that this so-called "Oxford comma" is "frequently, but in my view unwisely, omitted by many other publishers." Print managers, apparently anxious to save space as small as the width of a "l," now prefer, with the connivance of Webster's Third New International Dictionary, "marvelous" to "marvellous" and, worse, "worshiping" (which looks as though it rhymed with "sniping" and "piping") to "worshipping." There is even seen, as if to chime with "raped," "kidnaped."

Burchfield lays the blame for some of these slovenly preferences on American English, a terrain that was terra incognita to Fowler but where Burchfield does venture, albeit diffidently. He says, for example, apropos of quotation marks, that American publishers are "likely . . . to use double marks for a first quotation and single ones for a quotation within a quotation" when in fact they are certain to do so; quotation marks provide the quickest way to tell if a text has been typeset in the United States or Great Britain. Burchfield lists the striking Anglo-American differences in designating "rubbish/garbage" and its adjuncts. He takes gingerly note of the "minor curiosity" that "African-Americans frequently use the word *nigger* without giving offence when addressing other blacks"; Burchfield has already been taken to task by an American lexicographer, Jesse Sheidlower, in *The Atlantic Monthly*, for being "generally insensitive to the use of 'politically correct' language." Well, a linguistic descriptionist might argue, you have to take the language as you find it, warts and all.

Yet one does feel that some discipline should be maintained, and some rules of syntactical civility should bind us together. The contemporary wart that I take most gravely as a personal affront is the curious reversal, in popular speech, of the emphatic declaration "I couldn't care less" into its opposite, "I could care less," as if both meant the same thing. Burchfield, always the polite observer of the linguistic broils, comments, "No one has satisfactorily accounted for the synonymy of what would appear to be straightforwardly antonymous uses." The reason to me is clear: people are too lazy or hazy to realize that they are speaking within a descending scale of indifference the bottom rung of which they have just denied to the scorned subject. No fanatic about verbal proprieties, when it comes to such arrant muddle of meaning I find I *could* care less. ♦

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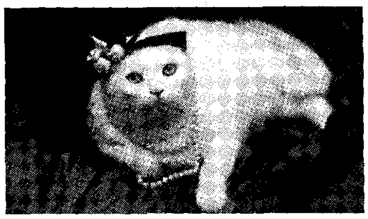

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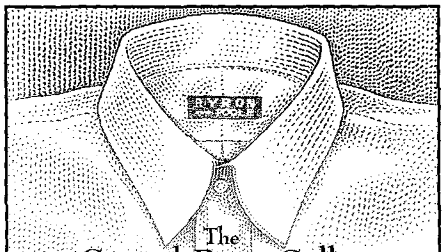

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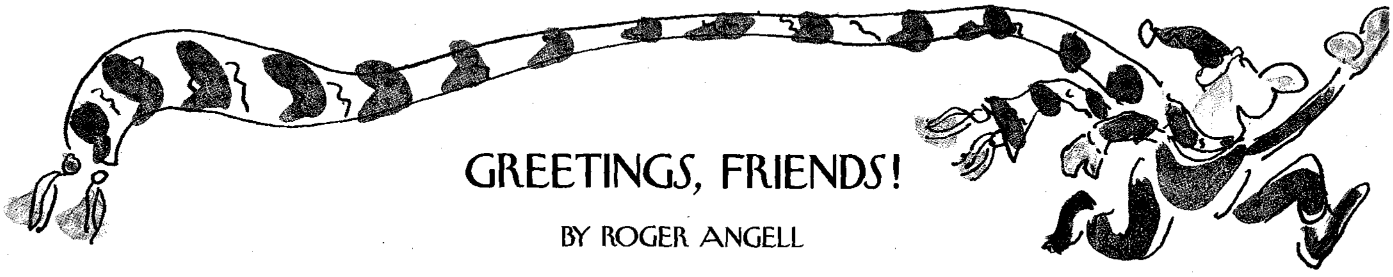

GREETINGS, FRIENDS!

BY ROGER ANGELL

BEHOLD, old pals, yon speeding Rover:
A beep, a screech—it's pulling over!
And wow, look now, where have you seen
This driver with uncertain mien,
With rheumy eyes and beard of cotton,
So quickly gone, so fast forgotten—
Who could it be, within the metre,
But your persistent Christmas greeter?
This low-rent gent unknits his brow,
Folds up his phone, and only now
Steps forth before you to reveal
A gentle smile and buns of steel!
It's *me*, pale reader, back to hail ya,
Clad in gladsome Yule regalia,
And wish you and your partners well
In this edition of Noël.
Good tidings, guys! Accept this hug
From me to you and Kerri Strug,
And now together—it's a reach:
God bless us, neighbors, all and each.
Well, *there* you go! And if I may
Expand that selfsame thought, hooray
For Ernie Els and Kathy Minton,
And Bill and Hill and Chelsea Clinton!
That useful year-end wish extends
To our subscribers: Greetings, friends,
As per above, so pax or *pace*,
Noël Annan and Versace;
Let's overnight by SantaMail
Our friendly thoughts to Pauline Kael,
Madeleine Albright, Amy Tan,
Steve Buscemi, and Jackie Chan.
Ah, there, Nomar Garciaparra,
Karen Allen, Allen Barra.
Wislawa Szymborska! Donovan Bailey!
I think upon you almost daily.
Eric Utne! Garrick Utley!
We love youse chaps, albeit subtly.
God rest you, goodly Fred McGriff;
Good luck, you plucky Braves—as if.
Why, here's Joe Torre, summer Santa,
Bearing presents from Atlanta—
Merry Christmas, doughty skipper,
And the missus and the nipper!
As gentle thoughts and snowflakes fall
On soccer mom and Cybermall,
We'll ask that good things tumble down
On Erskine Bowles and Trisha Brown,
Frances McDormand, Waldy Malouf,
Jessye Norman, and Hayden Carruth.
Anuta Catuna, might we honor
A palindromic marathoner,
Then hear a hearty "Ho-ho-ho!"
From Robert Dole . . . Bob Dole? Hello?
Well, never mind, but I'll propose a
Standing O for ol' Carm Cozza
Or risk a rhyme (if you'll abet it)
On Snoop Doggy Dogg and Andy Pettitte.
Happy days, and I don't mean maybe,
To Susan Molinari's baby,
To Johnny Apple and Charlie Rose,
Parker Posey and Counting Crows—
Not forgetting Madonna's own
Lourdes Maria Ciccone Leon!
So jump in, waits, with carolled praise
For Carolyn Bessette and Charlie Hayes;
For Bacon and Costner (a brace of Kevins),
Elio Fox and young George Evans,
Robert Hass, Tom Verducci,
Tasha Smith, and Stanley Tucci.
Come Christmas week, we'll sneak away
To find some northern chic chalet—
A snowbound hostel, though declining,
Like the setting of "The Shining."
While sleighbells break the woodland hush
For Minnie Driver and Norman Rush,
We'll roam the gloamy out-of-doors
With Alice Rogge, the Albert Gores,
And Shannon Lucid—who we wish'll
Light the slopes with Eric Fischl.
Within, beside the splendid tree,
We'll drink to absent company,
And clink the winking Clicquot glass
With Maya Lin and Bartabas.
Then party down, not quite alone,
With Alicia Silverstone,
Wishbone, Capt. Picard and Data;
Sonny, Zubin, Jugal Mehta;
Jeffrey Maier and Adam Platt
(Besieging Edwidge Danticat),
The A.K.C. (tho' not in toto),
And Banana Yoshimoto!

GODSPEED, good friends and rhymees, all!
Here ends our latest waterfall:
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and shopper reconciled.
A useful year, a bit more joy
To each of you is our envoi.
Keep such small thoughts as luck or leaven,
To lift your days in '97!

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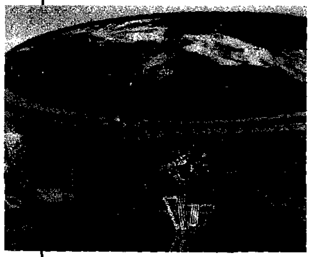

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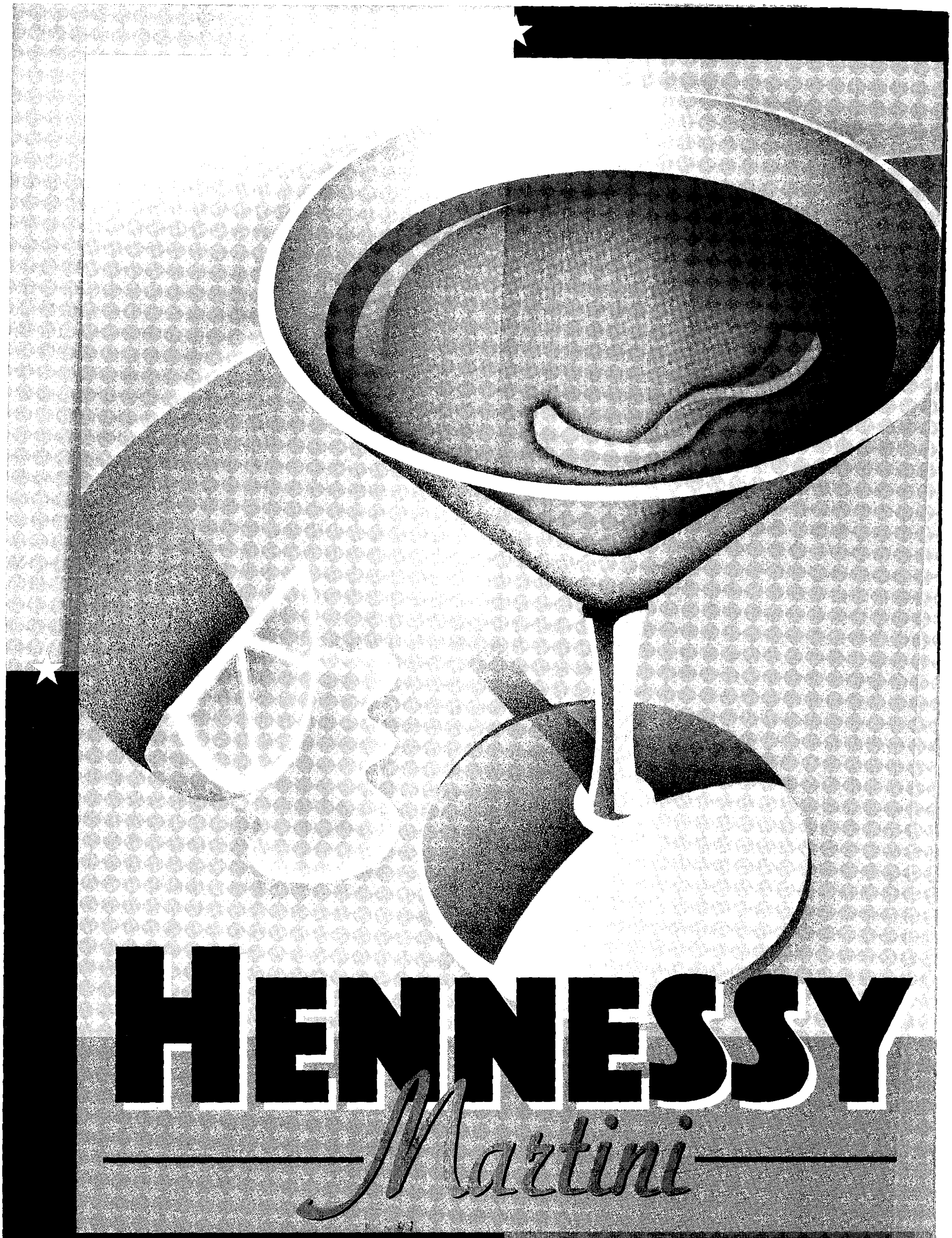
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Martini

Discover this classic. Combine 2 oz. of Hennessy V.S and a squeeze of lemon over ice. Stir gently, don't shake. Strain into a chilled martini glass. Or ask your bartender.